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# FAMILIAR LECTURES,

ON THE

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY,

AND OTHER SUBJECTS,

DELIVERED AT THE

UNITARIAN CHAPEL,

ST. NICHOLAS STREET,

IPSWICH,

BY T. F. THOMAS.

IPSWICH:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY R. ROOT, AND MAY BE HAD OF MARDON, FARRINGTON STREET; SMALLFIELD, NEWGATE STREET, AND J. GREEN, NEWGATE STREET, LONDON; LODER, WOODBRIDGE, AND OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

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1838.





## INTRODUCTION.

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IT ought not to be withheld from the public, that the following Lectures, which are published at the request not only of the author's much esteemed congregation, but also at that of many respectable friends, not members of the Unitarian society, were prepared in the ordinary course of his ministry, and without the remotest view to their appearing in print. The object in delivering these Lectures was, not to draw invidious comparisons between opposite religious opinions entertained in Christian truth, neither to undervalue the success of any portion of the Christian ministry of other denominations; but owing to circumstances which had transpired in the society previous to his appointment as its pastor, he felt it to be a duty he owed to himself, and to his Christian brethren, who lived in the same hope of the gospel, to examine again with all care and attention, the Unitarian grounds of Christian doctrines. Those who are acquainted with Unitarian writers, will find little that is new in the following Lectures, which contain only a plain statement of some of the evi-

dences for the sole Deity of the Father, and right views of his paternal government, by Jesus Christ, over the whole human race. To state these important truths in so familiar a manner as to be level to the humblest capacity, has been the author's most anxious desire; and so far as he is indebted to previous writers on the subjects of which these pages treat, so far is he anxious to acknowledge his obligations; but he begs also to state, in extenuation of the errors and defects which occur in the work, that the Lectures were composed on the urgency of the moment, and that he has not been enabled to bestow upon them that careful revision which he is satisfied they required.

Controversy is to many pious Christians, disagreeable; but its utility cannot be disputed, if, when conducted in the spirit of forbearance and love, it is found to promote the truth of Christianity, by unfolding its application to the circumstances of our state and nature. With this view of the nature of controversy, the author sincerely trusts, that in his humble effort to uphold what appears to him to be the truth, that nothing will be found to have escaped him, even in expression, as intolerant, or calculated to give offence to any sincere friend of Christian truth, and free enquiry. To him, study and investigation appear to be the appointed means for acquiring knowledge in any

department of the works of God, and that there is no other mode by which an acquaintance can be attained of God's holy word.

The author is aware of the solemnity and importance of the subjects he has undertaken to discuss; and although his sentiments thereon may not be in unison with the general views of the enquiring community—although much learning and piety may be arrayed against his positions, yet he still hopes that what he has advanced will be calmly and dispassionately weighed by the teachings of the law and the gospel, and be received, so far as their contents can be fully borne out and justified, by sacred counsel.

The author seeks not to proselytize opinion, but the heart and the affections—to win souls to Christ by the exercise of unbiassed judgement, honest conviction, the spirit of truth, of filial obedience and love. He has no sectarian objects to serve, but the sacred cause of his ascended master; the interests of Christian piety and practical godliness, in life, conversation, and social compact; and whilst he fervently prays for the blessing of God, upon this his humble effort to serve the cause of truth and righteousness, he also devoutly implores the Divine blessing upon all classes of his fellow Christians, engaged in pursuit of the same great end.



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## LECTURE I.

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### ON THE TRINITY.

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1 Cor. viii. 6.

BUT TO US THERE IS BUT ONE GOD, THE FATHER, OF WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND WE IN HIM; AND ONE LORD, JESUS CHRIST, BY WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND WE BY HIM.

THE great Apostle of the Gentiles exhorts Christians to “prove all things,” on which the illustrious Milton thus descants, Saint Paul judged that not only to tolerate, but to examine and prove all things, was no danger to our holding fast, that which is good. How shall we prove all things, which includes all opinions at least founded on Scripture, unless we not only tolerate them, but patiently hear them and seriously read them? “Religion is a reasonable service;” “Come now let us *reason* together saith the Lord;” is the very language in which the evangelical prophet admonished Israel. To those reasoning powers, with which we are endued, does the Almighty refer in Ezekiel 18c. 25v. “Hear now O house of Israel, is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?” Our blessed Saviour himself, also appeals to the discrimination of his hearers; judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement “yea and why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right”—nay as Christians we are commanded to exercise free enquiry in matters of religion; “search the scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me,” saith Jesus. The primitive Christians were required to give “a reason of their hope,” which they did in a manner that honoured their religion, but in these

*modern* times, we are called upon to lay *reason aside* in the solemn concerns of the soul, with a view we presume to perpetuate *any doctrine* of the human brain, however absurd. Not my fellow Christians to judge for ourselves, in matters of religion, is to deny our accountability to our Maker, since we can not be answerable for opinions not our own, and surely they who take from us this responsibility, will not engage to answer for us at the bar of God—or if they were rash enough to do this, we are not so weak as to trust them, because we are satisfied that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Rom. 14c. 12v.

It is somewhat surprising, that in the present day there should be found any persons bold enough to affirm that Revelation, supersedes the necessity of reason, “that we have nothing to do with the word of God, but to believe and obey it;” surely man without reason, cannot ascertain either the nature or the worth of religion, and it cannot be more absurd to prohibit the use of reason in matters of religion, than it would be to demand of us to shut our eyes to enjoy the light of day and the beauties of creation. Reason is a talent given to us by a merciful Parent, not to be thrown aside as useless, but to be exercised and improved. Away then with the folly of rejecting reason in matters of religion. To offer any argument, that reason should be so rejected, would be to reason *against* the use of reason.

But it is affirmed, that the Scriptures contain doctrines which are *above reason*—to which we reply, that, that doctrine which is above reason, can form no part of divine Revelation, this word *Revelation*, applying to things which are made known, and may be comprehended. It is surely unnecessary to observe that there are many things, far above human comprehension; but they relate not to those gracious terms of the Gospel, on the knowledge and reception of which depend our final happiness—whatever is necessary to salvation, is so plainly revealed, that the way-fairing man



may run and read it. Reason and Revelation being *gifts* of the same infinitely wise God, it is impossible they can clash with each other,—coming from the same eternal source of light, and sent, to promote man's moral perfection, his present and final happiness, each must be of equal value, in the sight of God, and in perfect accordance *one* with the other. Let us not be deterred from the free exercise of reason on religious subjects, for by this can we hope to carry forward the work of reformation, to remove error and superstition from the earth, and to send abroad the pure and holy light of the Gospel, into every benighted mind. Our present enquiry into the popular doctrine of the Trinity—to ascertain its reasonable and scriptural grounds, cannot be deemed either unimportant or impertinent by the lovers of truth. To compare the doctrines received by the majority of Christians as true, with those which are taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, is surely the bounden duty of every well-wisher to the cause of rational religion. This is the object of our present enquiry into the following hypothesis.

That there is but one God, consisting of three divine persons, the Father, Son, and *Holy Ghost*, each having his own mind, consciousness, and will—each sustaining different offices in the work of redemption, and that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, and yet that these three Gods with separate minds, consciousness, will, and offices are but one only God. This is the Trinitarian view of the Deity. On the other hand the Unitarians maintain that God is strictly one being, one intelligent agent, that agent which created and continues to sustain all worlds. It is somewhat singular that both parties appeal to the Old and New Testaments for support of their opposite sentiments. But the Unitarian appears to have a decided advantage over his religious opponents by being enabled to express his faith in the very language of Scripture, whilst the terms necessary to express the Trinitarian hypothesis, are not to be found in the

Bible. It is worthy of observation that the terms Trinity, Triune, Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity are no where to be found in Scripture. The expressions, 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person, three persons and one God are not in the Scriptures, neither is the expression God the Son but always Son of God. Neither in the Scriptures are we able to find the phrase, God the Holy Spirit, but the *Spirit of God* or the Holy Spirit. Hence as Unitarians we consider the omission of Trinitarian phraseology in the Bible, affords a strong presumptive argument against the Doctrine of the Trinity itself, and if the Scriptures do not expressly state it, we ask, are Christians justified in making a doctrine of inference, the terms of Salvation? If the sacred writings no where state this doctrine, it follows that it is unscriptural, and not divine. Is it reasonable and just to suppose that the Deity requires his children to regard and worship him as a Triune Deity, as three in one, and no where in his written word, teach the Doctrine? If the word of God no where points out to man a Trinity of persons in the godhead—if that word no where clearly and unreservedly declares the Trinity of God's nature by Jesus Christ as distinctly as he has declared his self-existence and immortality by the word *Jehovah*, made known to the Israelites by *Moses*, are any persons justified in maintaining the doctrine of the Trinity as a scriptural doctrine? Is it not also worthy of remark that every expression that can designate the oneness of God, the unity of the divine nature—is employed in Scripture while not one term can be found therein declaring God's Trinity in unity or his unity in Trinity. But probably some may be willing to believe in the Trinity as a doctrine of deduction, and we say as Unitarians, you have a right to do so, but do not condemn us to eternal woe, because we cannot deduce the same doctrine from the scriptures? Before we assent to any doctrine as scriptural, we have a right to demand that that doctrine be clearly and distinctly stated in scriptural language. When the sacred Scriptures declare repeatedly that God is one, which Trinitarians profess to hold as well as ourselves, we have a right to see that they as re-

peatedly and clearly declare that he is also three, before we believe it; no such evidence of God's nature and essence has as yet been produced. But we will appeal to the sacred Scriptures, and let them decide between the Unitarian and Trinitarian professor. The passages usually adduced as the strongest proof of the Trinity, among which we cannot seriously admit the words of John, 1st epistle, 5c. 7v. "There are three" &c., because it is now admitted by competent judges of all religious parties, to form no part of sacred writ. Those who have made this confession, are amongst the most eminent divines who have ever adorned this or any other country, viz. Erasmus, Luther, Bentley, Sir I. Newton, Waterland, Clarke, Jortin, Porson, Priestly, and many others. But admitting the words of John to be true, they afford no argument for the Trinity—where do we read in the passage about three persons and one God. It is said these three are one, which language is explained by the following verse, these three *agree* in one, *i. e.*, united in their testimony; observe, *testimony* is the thing spoken of, and not the substance or essence of Deity. In a similar sense Jesus Christ prayed to the Father, that he and his Disciples might be one, even as he and the Father were one.—John 17c. 22v. Again, "I and my Father are one," surely not one in essence, but of one mind, of one consent, mutually co-operating with each other for the salvation and final happiness of mankind, and in this sense alone could the Disciples and Christ be one. In the sense in which Paul meant when he said in 1 Cor. 3c. 8v. "He himself who planted and Apollos who watered were one." But the passage most commonly quoted to support the Trinity is the form of baptism, Matt. 28c. 19v., "Baptising them into the name of," &c. Now I ask, can the popular notions of the Trinity be fairly deduced from this passage! Does it assert that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three persons united in the Godhead? No! Does it say they are all equal? No! Does it affirm that each of these are to be worshipped in Unity? No such thing; then where is the doctrine in question to be found here? If the Son and Spirit being



united in the baptismal form with the Father, makes each God, as some assert, then the passage teaches that there are three Gods, but not a word is to be found therein about a Trinity in Unity or *Unity in Trinity*. If the passage proves nothing for the Trinitarian, it is as favourable to the Unitarian as to the Trinitarian. The next passage adduced as evidence of the doctrine in question, is that found in 2 Cor. 13c. 14v. ; The apostolic benediction “ The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be,” &c. Where in this language do we read of three persons and one God, of one in three and three in one? Besides, the passage does not at all accord with the mode in which Trinitarians express their doctrine. It does not speak of the Father, Son, and Spirit, but of Jesus Christ and God, and the Holy Spirit. It is the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy *Spirit*. How different is this to the Trinitarian form of benediction, which reads, “ the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” It appears evident from the manner in which the Apostle makes mention of the Holy Spirit in the benediction, that he did not believe it to be a person ; the communion of the Holy Spirit, implies the constant enjoyment of holy and pious thoughts and feelings,—therefore, so far from this text, affording an argument in favour of the *personality*, of the Holy Ghost, it militates directly against it, for it would be absolutely unintelligible to say that a person can be communicated,—Can a person be communicated?—Can a person be divided?—When a child is said to possess the spirit of its father, does the child become possessed of the father’s person?—Thus in three passages adduced as the strongest evidence of the Trinity, the doctrine is neither asserted nor taught, even by implication. In these three passages, altho they contain the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet we ask, do they assert that each is a separate deity, and yet all three make but one God?—It appears impossible, that any mind which had never been prejudiced in favour of creeds and catechisms,

could deduce either the *Athanasian*, *Nicene*, or *Apostle's Creed*, from the New Testament; observe that I have not yet disposed of the baptismal form, not that it is essential to our argument, for were we obliged to confess that we could not understand its precise meaning, this would not in the least degree affect the doctrine of the Divine Unity. The passage cannot afford the smallest evidence in favour of Trinitarianism, for not a word does it say about three persons in one God, and this omission is quite enough to satisfy the Unitarians of the absence of the Trinity. Jesus tells his Disciples to baptise in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *i. e.* baptise converts into the profession of a religion that is based on the knowledge of one God—of the Son, as the person appointed by God, as the mediator between himself and his children, and of the Holy Ghost, *i. e.* the divine influence which was attended by miraculous gifts. In favour of this view of the Holy Ghost, the primitive converts, *let it be remembered*, were accustomed to receive miraculous powers at their Baptism, which gift was foretold by our Lord. “He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters. But this spake he (says the Evangelist,) of the spirit, which they that believe on him, should receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified”—John 7c. 38v. And here we beg leave to refer to the Acts of the Apostles, as confirmatory of this view of the passage. By this reference we see at once, that the direction which our Lord gave respecting baptism, was not intended as a baptismal form, *i. e.* as a set of words to be employed when even baptism was performed, much less was it intended to convey a particular notion of the divine nature, into which converts were to be baptized: we infer this from the fact that the Apostles never used the words contained in the above direction; when they baptized, we never find them baptizing into the *Father*, *Son*, &c., but always simply into the name of Jesus. Now had our Lord intended his direction respecting baptism, to convey peculiar notions of

the Deity—of his consisting of a union of three persons : for instance, had the Apostles viewed it, in this light, they certainly would never have baptized one convert without using the very expressions of our Lord—they would not merely have baptized into *the name* of Jesus, as they did, but into the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But it may be asked, how was the Saviour's baptismal direction *at all* obeyed by the Apostles, if they only baptized in the name of Jesus? how was it obeyed in the *Spirit* if it was not intended to be understood in the *letter*? The answer is, that the Apostles *did* baptize according to our *Lord's* direction, if it be understood as we have interpreted it. For when they baptized converts into the name of Jesus they also virtually baptized them into the knowledge of the *one God*, from whom Jesus received his authority, and whose name he proclaimed—and converts were also baptized into the *Holy Spirit*, when they received the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, which they usually did, after their baptism into the name of Jesus. Peter in his first discourse after the gift of tongues, says “repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”—Acts 2c. 38v. Now, observe that the reception of the *Holy Spirit*, and the baptism into Jesus were separate things, and took place at different times. In Acts 8th, we read that when the people of Samaria believed *Philip's* preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised both men and women, and that then *Peter and John* were sent by the Apostles to these new converts, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the *Holy Spirit*, “For as yet” says the historian, “it was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptised in the name of Jesus; then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”—Verses 12 to 17. In Acts 19th we read that St. Paul found some disciples at Ephesus, who had never heard of the *Holy Spirit*, having been baptized in the baptism of John, on which the Apostle



baptised them in the name of the Lord Jesus, and then laying his hands upon them, the *Holy Spirit* came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." From this enquiry we learn, first that the baptism into the name of Jesus was usually attended with the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the converts, from which circumstance, we argue that this effusion of the *Holy Spirit* was what our Lord alluded to in his injunction respecting baptism. "Baptise them into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." And secondly, we argue, that as the baptism into Jesus, and the baptism into the *Holy Spirit* took place, the one after the other, that the Apostles were no Trinitarians, for had they been, they certainly would have baptised converts into the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *all at once*, as Trinitarians now do, and not as in the instance of the Samaritans, have sent a Deacon to baptize into the name of Jesus, and then sent two of their own body afterwards to confer the baptism of the Spirit. And now whilst speaking of spirit, allow us to state what appears to Unitarians to be the scriptural view upon this subject. We do not consider the Holy Spirit as a person, as we think the language of Scripture, concerning it is quite opposed to such a notion. It is said to be *poured out*—shed—*given without measure*—men are baptized with it—filled with it—said to partake of it—now can these be affirmed of a person? they accord only with the idea that the Holy Spirit is a divine influence, or *feeling*, or *power*. God surely does not become another person, when He gives his spirit to men, when he exercises an influence over their minds; and observe God the Spirit does not occur in scripture, but the term *Spirit of God* often occurs, and used to signify God himself: for instance,—1 Cor. 2c. 11v., "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Hence then as the spirit of man, is the man himself; so the Spirit of God, is God himself: and the baptismal form which Trinitarians consider affords so strong an argument in favour of their hypothesis, is no evidence of the

three persons in the Godhead. There are other passages of scripture which are thought to afford evidence of the Trinity; which only require to be stated, to shew that they are no evidence of three persons alike *equal* and *supreme*, in the Godhead. “God annointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” “Jesus received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost.” God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him, *i. e.* Jesus Christ. He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by the spirit that dwelleth in you. Now how can these assertions be reconciled with the doctrine that God who *gave* the spirit, is the being who *received* the spirit, and he who *received* it, is He that *gave* it!! Again, the Deity is never described in the sacred Scriptures as a Triune God, neither do we find in them any authority for worshipping one God in Trinity or the Trinity in Unity. Trinitarians tell us we must worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity. Where do we find this in Scripture? what says the Saviour, whose direction in these matters ought surely to be followed; “when ye pray, say, our Father who is in Heaven”—Pray to thy Father who is in, &c. The true worshippers, shall &c., “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” We beg leave also to observe, on this part of our subject, that Jesus acknowledged but *one object* of supreme worship, and declares that *object* to be the *Father*. Now had the Saviour commanded us to pray to *God*—to *worship God*, the Trinitarian might have argued that the word *God* included the Father, Son, and *Holy Spirit*, the three persons in the Godhead, and consequently the command to worship *God* implied the worship of the three persons in the Trinity. But our Saviour’s language excludes any such supposition, for he distinctly commands us to worship the *Father*, who, according to Trinitarianism, is only one person of the Godhead. Therefore the Saviour did not teach his disciples to worship the Father in the way in which he is worshipped by Trinitarians. The term *Father* implies seniority;



which then we should like to be informed, is the *Father* in the Trinitarian's view of the Trinity, for it is composed of three Gods, each co-equal and co-eternal with the other? Neither the language nor the practice of our Lord affords any ground for Trinitarian worship. Now let us turn to the apostles to see if they countenance the Trinity. In the 4th Acts we read, they lift up their voice to God with one accord and said "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that in them is." They then mention Jesus as God's holy child, or *servant*, whom God had annointed, and they beseech God that signs and wonders may be done, in the *name* of his Holy child, or servant Jesus. Here is a prayer of the twelve apostles, but it does not contain an invocation to three Gods. St. Paul in his devotions countenances no Trinity, "I bow my knees saith he to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Blessed be the *God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, making mention of you in my prayers, that the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom." He commands the Ephesians to give thanks always for all things, unto God, even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul's epistles contain several ascriptions of praise to God, and are always addressed to *one* person "*God the Father.*" There are about twenty-eight ascriptions of praise to God in the New Testament, but from none of them could an unprejudiced mind deduce the doctrine of the Trinity. To us it appears strange how a Trinitarian can worship *one God*, if he believes that in the unity of the Godhead, three *distinct persons* are to be worshipped. But we beseech of you to consider the offices assigned to the three persons of the Trinity. The Father is styled the Creator, the Son the Redeemer, the Holy Spirit the sanctifier—now a peculiar office being assigned to each person of the Godhead, and a peculiar favour as appertaining to each, when the Trinitarian asks for all these blessings at once. What language is necessary to be employed by the humble suppliant? the following, "O God the Father of Heaven have mercy

upon us miserable sinners"—“O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy,” &c.—“O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy”, &c.—And then, it does appear, as if they address a 4th person made up of the other three, and pray thus, “O Holy blessed and glorious Trinity—three persons *and one God*, have mercy,” &c. Now, where in the sacred Scriptures, are we directed to worship three or four such objects as the prayers in the litany, point out? Again, the Trinity destroys the harmony which ought to exist between the Father and the Son. The Father, according to the Trinitarian scheme, sentences his creatures to everlasting perdition. The Son interferes, and stays his Father’s purpose, by suffering in his own person, the wrath intended for man. By this step, the Trinitarians represent Jesus as pacifying the Father, and enabling offenders to escape the vindictiveness of God. Thus the Son is represented more merciful than God, and both Father and Son actuated by different principles, the one is inexorable, and inflexibly just—the other is made to appear merciful, and full of compassion. Is it possible to regard two such opposite characters as *one* and the same being; and how can we believe that two such dissentient minds can reside in one God; and how can we avoid preferring *one* before the *other*? If the Father *frowns* upon me, with all the malice of infinite vindictiveness, then I shall love the Son in preference to the Father, for He *smiles* upon me in the loveliness of mercy and compassion—where a frown will terrify, a smile shall win the heart. What a confused object is the God of the Trinity, to use the words of a modern writer; the Trinitarian Deity is a heterogeneous being, who is, at the same moment, one and many—who includes in his own nature the relations of Father and Son, or in other words is Father and Son to himself—who, being viewed as one person, is at the same moment, the supreme God, and a mortal man; *omniscient and ignorant*, almighty and impotent; such a being is certainly the most puzzling and distracting object, ever presented to human

thought. In contemplating so changing a God, the mind finds nothing to rest upon; and instead of receiving distinct and harmonious impressions, is disturbed by shifting unsettled images. To commune with such a God, must be as difficult, as to converse with a man of three different countenances, speaking with three different tongues.—The fact is, that our orthodox brethren do not worship three distinct Gods, but rather a *Trinity of names*,—and it would be well for those who speak in the most disrespectful manner of Unitarian views of God, and who boast of orthodoxy, to look into their own minds, and enquire if they are orthodox, and consistent Trinitarians. There is reason to believe that three parts of those who profess to hold the Trinity, have scarcely bestowed one half hour's serious thought upon the subject; they content themselves with the reflection that it is a mystery, and therefore not to be explained, and hence they are satisfied with confessing a doctrine with their lips, which is, on their own showing, inexplicable. But how any Christians can believe that doctrine which they cannot understand or explain, we are at a loss to imagine. As it regards the mystery of the Trinity, the last refuge of the Trinitarian, when pressed with the difficulties that attend his doctrine, what is more humiliating to him than to be obliged to fly to mystery, to shelter him from the argument of an opponent. The Trinitarian asserts that the Trinity cannot be explained because it is a mystery; we do not call upon him to explain the doctrine, but merely to state it in terms that we can understand; and when he employs language in expressing the doctrine which according to its common interpretation, represents three distinct deities, to use the language of holy writ, and not that of fallible men. If he attaches a peculiar meaning to the word in which he states his doctrine, let him explain this meaning to us, but it is mere evasion to tell us he cannot explain the doctrine because it is a mystery, when we only ask him to explain the expressions in which he clothes the doctrine. When so much difference of opinion pre-

vails among the Trinitarian advocates themselves respecting the Trinity—when it cannot be stated by them in intelligible terms, surely Unitarians are at liberty to doubt the truth of such a doctrine. We should like to know what the unlearned man can make of the Trinity, when one Divine tells him it is the union of *three persons*, in the Godhead—another that it consists of three *differences*, by another of three diversities—by another of three *subsistencies*—by another of three distinct cogitations, and by another of three somewhats. When so many opinions are intended among Trinitarians themselves, respecting their own doctrine, surely Unitarians may be permitted to entertain an opinion different from all the rest, which is that the Trinity itself is an error. We trust that as a body of Christians, it is, and ever will be our desire to avoid offending against the Unity of the Deity, so explicitly revealed in Scripture, and to hold fast the belief of one God, in one being. The Trinitarian thinks he can believe a God in three persons, without destroying the Unity of the Deity—be it so. But as he cannot explain the conceptions of his own mind to the satisfaction of those who enquire into his doctrine—as he cannot express his own notions, without appearing to destroy the Unity of the Deity—let him learn to forbear with his Unitarian brother who clings to the more literal interpretation of Scripture, who is fearful of offending the Deity by representing him to be what he is not, especially since the Trinitarian cannot produce a single passage in the Bible, in which his doctrine is taught, in the language he employs in stating it. As Unitarians, we object to the doctrine of the Trinity, because it is not to be found in the sacred writings, and cannot be expressed in scriptural language, but that a new phraseology is obliged to be invented for the purpose of stating it, and according to our conceptions, at least, it cannot be held consistently with the simple and lovely doctrine, so plainly taught in scripture, that God is *one* and not *three*, that he is a spirit and not a



person, "God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." There is one point more in the controversy between us and the Trinitarians, which deserves consideration, it is this, we have heard within these few years, some Trinitarians make use of an argument on their side of the question, which has surprised us not a little. They maintain that they who believe in the Deity of Christ, and in the doctrine of the Trinity, are as strictly Unitarians as we are. Now this is amusing; we heartily rejoice to think that that name which it has been the fashion through so many years to despise and miscall, is growing into favour with the world. Peace to your slumbering ashes, ye departed Unitarian worthies, and hallowed the spot where ye lie, but could ye know the mighty changes that have taken place in the religious world since ye laboured therein, there would be a mighty shaking amongst your dry bones, and your tombs, methinks, would scarcely contain ye. But let us for one moment enquire into the claims of Trinitarians to the name Unitarians. "They say they are Unitarians as well as we—how so? the term Unitarian, does not mean and never did mean, simply a believer in one God as distinguished from Polytheists. How can it mean this, seeing that it is a term which has arisen out of disputes within the Christian church, where all parties have ever professed to believe in only *one God*. Let them consider to what conclusion this objection leads—a conclusion which they will be the last persons to admit. Are not Unitarian and Trinitarian correlative and opposite terms? does the name *Trinitarian* signify a believer in three Gods? they would answer *no*, it means a believer in three divine persons in one God; well then, the Unitarian, which is the opposite term to Trinitarian, does not mean simply a believer in one God, but a believer in the strict personal Unity of God, do Trinitarians believe in the Unity of God in this sense? certainly not—how then can Trinitarians be Unitarians as well as we?" But to conclude, in this discourse we have only noticed those passages of scripture, which are allowed to be

the strongest arguments in favour of the Trinity, and from these we maintain that the doctrine in question cannot be fairly deduced. We have seen that the doctrine is not contained in the recorded discourses of Christ and his Apostles; neither is it found in the confessions of faith required of the primitive converts—neither is it recognised in the earliest controversies, which agitated the church; no traces of the Trinity are found in ecclesiastical history, until after the Apostolic age. But after Christianity began to be corrupted by the speculations of philosophers, then it became developed, and was the subject of serious contention. The Trinity sprung up subsequently to the times of the Apostles. Mosheim, whose religious bias was in favour of the Trinity, says, “in the year 317, a *new* contention arose in Egypt, which kindled deplorable divisions in the Christian world.” It was the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead, a doctrine which in the three preceding centuries, had happily escaped the vain curiosity of human researches. The Emperor Constantine, not considering the importance of the discussion, addressed a letter to the contending parties, in which he admonished them to end their disputes; but when the prince saw that his admonitions were without effect, and that the troubles and disputes were daily spreading throughout the empire, he assembled in the year 325, the famous council at Nice, in Bithynia, wherein the deputies of the church were requested to put an end to the controversy, And in 331, 150 bishops gave the finishing stroke to what the council of Nice had left imperfect, and fixed, in a full and determinate manner, the doctrine of three persons in one God, which is yet received among Christians as the gospel of Jesus Christ. From this time the Trinity became enrolled amongst the orthodox doctrines, and though *Calvin* expressed his disapprobation of the word as barbarous, and savouring of heathenism, and *Melancthon*, bewailed the sanguinary tragedies it would cause to be enacted, the reformation did not destroy its roots, and it is still a *upas tree*, in the garden of theology, withering the

tender plants of truth and righteousness. Before our Trinitarian brethren pronounce Unitarianism a false and dangerous doctrine, let them seriously consider the following facts: that in the old Testament, there are about 2000 passages in which the Unity of God is either positively expressed or implied. In the New Testament, the Father is styled *one*, or *only God*, seventeen times; he is also styled *God absolutely*, by way of eminence and supremacy, 320 times. The highest epithets or attributes are applied to him 105 times, and there are no less than 90 passages which shew that all prayers and praises ought to be offered to him; and there are no less than 300 passages wherein the Son is represented as subordinate to the Father, deriving his being from him, receiving from him his divine power, and acting in all things, agreeably to the will of God. Surely amidst all this evidence in favour of God's Unity and of his supremacy to the Saviour, Unitarians are justified in maintaining that altho' "there be that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or in earth, (as there be Gods many and Lords many) yet to *us*, there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we by him." 1 Cor. 8c. 5 and 6v. We will now relieve your patience, by expressing our gratification on observing your attention to the arguments this evening, adduced to shew that the doctrine of the Trinity is neither taught nor deducible from the word of God, and as Unitarians, we ardently pray that the progress of light and knowledge will be fatal to the doctrine of the Trinity. Of this we feel convinced by the qualification and explanations to which its advocates are accustomed to resort. It is not trusted in its original mystery, and its deformity is covered up and concealed from the vulgar gaze, by the additions of ingenious theologians. But it can never stand the test of an enquiring age. Reason will refuse to lend its testimony to support a contradiction. Charity will rejoice at the dispersion of error which has embittered the lives and deaths of thousands, and shed the blood of many martyrs.

Yes, my friends, *we* may not live to see it, but as sure as the word of God is true, and the Scriptures become more investigated and better understood, so surely will the doctrine of the Trinity be exploded. Already, many passages once considered irrefragable proofs of it, are given up by its more enlightened advocates. Already, texts which were once thought indubitable evidence of that doctrine, are now quietly resigned to take their place on neutral ground. But we have stronger reasons than all these, for believing that the doctrines of the Trinity must ere long be bound together, and placed upon the shelf of some antiquary, to be looked at by coming generations as a curious relic of their pious forefathers' theological blunders, and amazing credulity. Such my friends, as the history of the past, the character of man, the tendencies of society, and the language of prophecy, these lead us to believe, that the time is hastening, when the mystery of the Trinity shall give place to the glorious doctrine of the divine Unity. "The hour cometh, yea, is already come, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."



## LECTURE II.

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### ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

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*Matt. xxii. 42.*

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST—WHOSE SON IS HE ?

In calling your attention this evening to an inquiry into the nature and person of our blessed Master, we have no other end in view but, to the best of our ability to endeavour to answer the question propounded by our Saviour in the words of our text. It must be well known to you all, that this enquiry has occasioned violent dissensions, and given rise to various opinions in the Christian church; about which polemics are still disputing with more zeal, it is to be feared, than charity. The various opinions which have been entertained respecting the nature and person of our Lord Jesus Christ, by those who have professed to be his disciples, may now be considered as divided into three distinct classes. The first maintain that Christ has existed from eternity, and is the second person of the Trinity, *co-equal* and *co-eternal* with God; the second, that he is a subordinate spirit, or intelligent being, employed by God in creating and governing this world, and who upon his miraculous conception and birth, animated his body, and supplied the place of a human soul. The *third* class, maintain that Jesus Christ was in body and mind, truly a human being, who had no existence before his conception—but was distinguished from all other human beings and prophets of the most High God, by being appointed or chosen of the Father, to be the Saviour of men. The first of these doctrines is called the *Trinitarian*, the second the *Arian*, and the third the *Unitarian* scheme. The first hypothesis having been, as we endeavoured to shew in our last lecture,

taken under the protection of the civil power, about the year 317, and ever since enjoyed the sanction of councils, and synods, and found a principal place in the creeds of almost all established churches, it is reasonable to suppose, that it has taken very deep root in the human mind, and consequently every other hypothesis opposed to this, has been considered both dangerous and false. Nevertheless no religious doctrine ought to be pronounced as false and dangerous, merely because it has not the sanction of the edicts of emperors, the decree of councils, or the prescription of churches, but to be held false, or true, according to the extent to which it agrees with, or is opposed to, the language of the sacred Scriptures. Religion is a concern between man and his maker ; and man is accountable to none but to God, for the consequences of any religion he may espouse, provided that his religion rests upon the word of God, and is calculated to make him a good man, and a useful member of society. As we are addressing Protestant Christians, we feel that we are not called upon to offer the least apology for exercising our right to enquire into the truth or error of the popular notions respecting the nature, and person of Jesus Christ ; because, if on enquiry, it is found, that such popular notions do not rest on scriptural evidence, it is the duty of every lover of truth, and particularly that of a Christian teacher, to protest against them ; and if on the other hand, such notions are not only supported by, but expressly taught in the Scriptures, every man is bound to cherish and maintain them. If whilst instituting an enquiry into the Trinitarian views of our blessed Saviour, we by any possibility, let fall expressions which Trinitarian advocates may deem too harsh or uncharitable, let our apology be the consequences of their doctrine, rather than a wilful attempt to wound their religious prejudices. Having made these few preliminary observations, we shall first enquire whether Jesus Christ was in every respect one and the same with the supreme Deity, at the same time that he was truly man ? The Trinitarian affirms that in the person

of Jesus Christ, two natures were united, a *Divine and Human*—that the divine nature was in every respect God, and possessed therefore every attribute of the supreme being, the *Almighty Jehovah*—that the human nature was that of a mortal man, but without sin. In stating this doctrine it is sometimes declared that the *Almighty* took upon him our nature, at others that *Jesus Christ* was the one supreme God. Of this doctrine, we are compelled to confess that we do not understand *the terms* in which it is expressed, and that like the *Trinity* it involves very serious inconsistencies. To assert that Jesus was at the same time *perfect God and perfect Man*, appears to be a contradiction. God we believe is a being of infinite perfection—but man is an imperfect creature, how then can these be supposed to exist together so as to make one person, —one intelligent being? Is it possible to believe that omnipotence and weakness, omniscience and ignorance, can be united in one mind? Would it not be as reasonable and intelligible to assert that light is darkness, that heat is cold, and that sweetness is bitterness? Would it not be considered as a monstrous inconsistency, to say that a man in the perfect possession of his rational powers, could at the same time be completely an irrational being—but this would surely not be a bolder assertion than to say, that the divine and human nature, each perfect and complete in itself, could subsist together in *one* person; for be it ever remembered that there is a far broader line of separation between the *supreme being* and *man*, than between *man* and an *irrational animal*. Is it to be believed for one moment, that the entire essence of the Deity—that all his attributes in their *infinite perfection*, could reside in a *human being*? “That the high and the lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, could actually be confined within the limits of a human frame? Do our Trinitarian brethren rightly consider what they say when they affirm that Jesus Christ is *God Almighty*. Observe, that the term Jesus Christ, is the name of our Saviour as *man*—it is the name by which he was distinguished

while on earth, from other human beings. Surely it will not be asserted that his *human flesh* was *God*, nor will his *human soul* be said to be God, what portion then of Jesus Christ, is said to be God? Is it the divine nature that dwelt within him, *i. e.* within his *human* nature? If this be said, it surely cannot entitle the *man* Christ Jesus, to be considered as God supreme. The *Deity* dwelling within Christ cannot constitute him the supreme Being, no more than the Deity's dwelling within Christians, (as he is said to do in scripture,) can constitute them Gods. Christ says, that he and the Father dwelt in those that loved him. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—John 14c. 23v. But this surely cannot make a Christian, both Christ and the Father, because they are represented as abiding with him. St. Paul says to the Corinthians, in the 2nd epistle, 2c. 6-16v., "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." Christ tells the Philippians, in 2c. 13v., "That God worketh in them both to will and to do." He tells the Ephesians in 4c. 6v., "That there is one God and Father of all, who is in you all." John says, 1 John 4c. 15v. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the *Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.*" St. Peter declares, 2 Pet. 1c. 4v. that "By the precious promises of the Gospel, Christians are made partakers of the *divine nature.*" This is a very strong expression — and when St. Paul says, "That in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead," he must have used this language in the sense in which he prayed that the Ephesians might be filled with all the fulness of God,—Ephesians 3c. 19v. and in John 1c. 16v.. In both cases the texts shew that *divine knowledge*, and not *essence*, is intended. Hence then, when God is said to dwell in Christ, it evidently means that Christ was inspired by God—filled or actuated by a divine power, and this is the Unitarian's belief. We readily acknowledge in this sense, that God dwelt in Jesus Christ, that there was an intimate *union* existing be-



tween them, that all his glorious miracles were performed by *divine power*, and that his holy doctrine was *derived* from the *fountain* of divine wisdom. By the Saviour's being *super-eminently* inspired as no Prophet had ever been before, ("for God gave not the Spirit by measure to him.") The Unitarian advocates the *scriptural divinity* of Christ, but he is obliged to admit that the *Supreme Being invested Christ* with all power, and consequently, that the *power he possessed*, was *derived*, for the Saviour himself, says, "all power is *given* unto me." That in Jesus were united *perfect manhood*, and *perfect Deity*, so as to form one person, is a doctrine which as Unitarian Christians, we dare not entertain for one moment. It is the duty of our Trinitarian brethren to produce *Scriptural evidence* for the doctrine, that the great Creator of Heaven and Earth, took upon him a *human form*, that the man Jesus Christ, was also at the same time the *God of the universe*. Where do the advocates for this doctrine find in the Scriptures, the expressions they use in reference to it, as *God Man*, *Jehovah Jesus*, *Incarnate Deity*? These phrases are no where in the Bible; like the terms employed to state the doctrine of the Trinity, they are, suffer it to be spoken, mere human inventions, and as the expressions employed to state it are not in Scripture, we are compelled to confess that the doctrine itself is not there. If it be argued, that the Scriptures say, that the word was made—more properly *was* flesh, and that "God was manifested in the flesh;" we reply, we see nothing in these passages of the *incarnation* of the *word* or of *God*; a doctrine which we cannot admit without the most express authority of Holy Writ. To us the first passage conveys only the doctrine, that the divine word, the gospel of grace and truth, was made known to man through the medium of the Man Jesus Christ—that as the Father was in him, and he in the Father, from whom he derived his doctrine, and his works, John, 14c. 9v., "those who beheld Jesus, beheld the Father, whom he represented." If Adam was said to be created after the likeness of God, surely Jesus Christ, far superior to

Adam in spiritual gifts, may be viewed as the image of the invisible God. It appears that the doctrine of Christ's two natures was assumed, in order to reconcile the apparently discordant language used in Scripture, respecting our Lord. That Jesus Christ was in all respects a *human being*, Trinitarians find too plainly asserted to be doubted, but perceiving epithets and expressions applied to him which they consider can only properly apply to God, they immediately assume that *Christ* was *God* as well as *man*; that he possessed *two natures* the one divine, the other human. But surely this is an unfair rule of interpreting the Scriptures. That because they appear to teach two doctrines inconsistent with each other, *both* should be admitted, instead of one being made to conform to the other. If a writer makes two assertions which apparently contradict each other, which cannot both be literally interpreted, *common* sense tells us we must receive one of the assertions either in a figurative or different sense to the other. Now apply this mode of reasoning to the doctrine under consideration. If Christ is declared in scripture to be a *man*, and also has expressions applied to him therein, which seem to belong to a superior nature, as he was well known to exist in his human nature—it follows of course, that the expressions which seem to denote his possession of a divine nature, must be figuratively received; for to suppose two natures so different, not to say opposed, as are the divine and the human, to subsist together, in one person, is to suppose a manifest inconsistency. Surely those who argue the deity of Christ from the exalted epithets and expressions which are used respecting him in the Scriptures, are unacquainted with the character of the Eastern style of writing. Eastern phraseology must not be interpreted by the rules which govern the languages of colder climates. The inhabitants of the East and West, do not differ more in *character, habits and costume*, than in their languages. There is a simplicity and soberness prevailing the language of the North of Europe, unknown to that of the inhabitants of the East. We know very well, that

Eastern rulers who exercise despotic sway, are addressed by epithets which really sound to an European's ear, blasphemous. Remember, the Bible is Eastern, it relates to Eastern countries, to Eastern people and manners, and in the Bible we consequently find that frequent use of metaphor, and that extravagance of expression, for which the Eastern language is so remarkable. Hence we find kings and even judges styled Gods, Exodus, 22c. 28v. "Thou shall not revile the Gods or the Rulers." Exodus, 21c. 6v. "His master shall bring his servant to the Gods," *i. e.* to the judges. God said to Moses, "see I have made thee a God to Pharaoh." Exodus 7c. 1v. "Thou shalt be to him instead of God." Exodus 4c. 16v. David's reproof of the judges is remarkable in Psalm, 82c. 1 to 6v. "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth among the Gods, I have said ye are Gods, and all of you are children of the most high." This passage be pleased to observe is the very same quoted by our Lord in answer to the Jews who accused him of making himself God. "Is it not written in the law, I said ye are Gods;" "If he called them Gods, to whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken) say ye of him whom the *Father* hath sanctified and sent into the World, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God." Here then is our Lord appealing to the analogy of the Jewish language, in justification of applying to himself the term *Son of God*. If the term *Son of God* might appear to some, to convey to their minds the notion of a divine nature, let them remember the epithet is frequently applied to Christians in the Scriptures, and therefore conveys no notion of a divinity of nature. We are generally directed by our Trinitarian brethren, to the 9th of Isaiah and 6th verse, as positive proof of Christ's deity. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called *Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,*" &c. The latter part of this passage, will admit of the following translation. *His name*, observe this

refers to his title, not to his essence, shall be *Wonderful, Counsellor*, the Strong, the Mighty, the Father of the age, the Prince of Peace. Now it is more than doubtful whether this passage refers to our Saviour at all, but to the *times* in which the prophecy was delivered. We will give a few reasons for thinking so of this passage. The context plainly shews that the passage predicts the birth of *Hezekiah* the *Son of Ahaz*, who was to establish the kingdom of Judah, the destruction of which was threatened by the kings of Syria and Israel. This will be plainly seen by reference to the 7th of Isaiah. This prophecy may be applied to Christ, though it is worthy of notice, that it has not that we are aware of, been referred to as applicable to Christ in any part of the New Testament. Now supposing the common translation correct, the application of such lofty epithets to a distinguished personage is quite in unison with the figurative character of the oriental style of writing. And this explanation of the 9th applies as well to the 7th of Isaiah. Indeed it might easily be shewn, if time permitted, that according to the use of the very same words, and upon the testimony of learned Trinitarians, as well as Unitarians, that those lofty expressions do not refer to his nature and essence, but to his office, on the admission that the prophecy refers to Christ. But the verse admitted as a prophecy referring to Christ, means that Christ besides being *Wonderful, Counsellor, Prince of Peace*, was also to be a mighty ruler or potentate, and the author or founder of an everlasting dispensation. And if this be the right interpretation of the passage, then the deity of Christ receives not the shadow of support from it. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*." Isaiah 7c. This also is a prophecy respecting the birth of *Hezekiah*. *The virgin*, or so it ought to be rendered, not a virgin, is the city of Jerusalem, and not *Mary* the mother of our Saviour; that city, as every reader of the Bible knows, is frequently styled by the prophets, "*The virgin, the daughter of Zion*."—Isaiah 23c. 12, 19, 21v. Jeremiah 14c. 17v. Then the city of Jerusalem



it is declared, shall produce a son, *i. e.* Hezekiah, who shall deliver the city from the hands of the *Israelitish and Syrian Kings*. Those who demur at this interpretation, and still assert that the 7th of Isaiah refers to the Saviour, are at liberty so to do, but ere they apply this prophecy to Jesus Christ, they have a right to meet and explain away the following difficulty. What sign or consolation could it have been to *Ahaz*, terrified as we may easily imagine he was at the approach of two powerful enemies, and the anticipated loss of his throne and life, to be told that a virgin, or as some will have it *Mary*, should conceive and bear a son 700 years after his death, to restore to him his lost kingdom? As it respects the title Immanuel, *i. e.* God with us, its application to Hezekiah is in the hyperbolic style of the East. The familiar manner in which the Jews employed the name of God is remarkable, and may appear to us a desecration of that sacred name; but the term *God* is frequently found in Scripture, to have entered into the composition of common names. Thus Hezekiah signifies God my strength, Israel, *prince of God*, Jonathan, *perfection of the Lord*, Ishmael, *God who hears*, Samuel, *God with them*, Elisha, *God who saves*, Elijah, *God the Lord*. And even the *incommunicable* name of Jehovah, as some call it, is applied to inanimate objects. Thus the city of Jerusalem is called, "Jehovah our righteousness." Jer. 33c. 16v. Hence its application to Christ in the 23rd chapter of the same prophecy, is no proof of the deity of our Saviour. Abraham called the place where he was about to sacrifice his son, Jehovah-jireth; and Moses applies the name *Jehovah-nissi*, to an altar. The application of the epithet God to the person of Jesus Christ, can be no proof of his deity—of his being the supreme God, for we find the same epithet applied to persons far inferior in dignity and power to the Saviour. The divinity of Christ's nature cannot be proved by epithets and expressions of far less force, which are yet produced as incontrovertible evidence on this point, such inferior epithets for instance as these, *form of God*, and *brightness of his glory*, and the ex-

*press image of his person*, which refer to the office of Christ, not to the essence of God. Now if Christ was the *form of God*, and *the likeness*, and *the image*, and *the brightness of God*, how could he be the form of God, and God and the form also? And if he be the image of God, how can he be God's image, and the very God himself whose image he is? Another passage is generally quoted to prove the deity of Christ, in which the Son appears to be directly addressed as God, Hebrews 1c. 8v. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Here we beg to observe that there is no evidence in the original, that this should be considered as a direct address to the son. It does appear so in our common version, but the word *pros* translated *unto* properly, signifies *concerning, with respect to*. And in the 7th verse our translators have rendered it in the sense of concerning, "And of the angels he saith," *i. e.* concerning the angels. We then, as Unitarians, understand this 8th verse of Hebrews not as a direct address to the Son, but as a quotation from the *Old Testament*, which the writer of this Epistle declares in some way *concerns* the son. The passage is taken from the 45th Psalm, where there can be very little doubt of its application to Solomon, and written on occasion of his marriage with the daughter of the King of Egypt. If, therefore, our translation of this passage were the only admissible one, we must needs understand the word *God* in an inferior sense, as applied to princes, rulers, and judges. Dr. Young translates this verse, "Thy throne, O prince, is for ever and ever." But we are satisfied that the proper translation of this passage is "God is thy throne for ever and ever, *i. e.* God is the founder, the supporter, the protector of thy dominion—as David calls God *his rock, his tower, his shield, and his defence*." Now then, how does the matter stand between us and our Trinitarian brethren, in reference to this passage? We have here an ambiguous passage of Scripture which may be fairly translated either way, "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever," or "God is thy throne for ever and ever."

Now how shall we determine which is right? We look further into the passage, and we find that the person spoken of is a creature, one whom God hath anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, “because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity.” Surely this ought to determine us instantly towards that translation which makes it applicable to a creature. Probably my Trinitarian brethren say *no!* It is true the person to whom the text refers is a creature, but still, we must understand this ambiguous passage in the sense which makes it applicable only to God most high, and then to do this, we must infer that the person spoken of had two natures, the human and the divine! Now we ask confidently, whether any other subject of human knowledge would be treated in this manner! whether any other book but the Bible was ever interpreted in this manner? And if it were, whether we should not make absurdity and contradiction appear throughout its every page. Having adduced evidence to shew that the application to our Lord of the highest titles even that of *God itself*, is no proof of his Deity, we might rest the whole of Unitarianism upon this foundation, and it could not be shaken. But, our Trinitarian brethren, believing in the two natures of Christ, a doctrine, the consequences of which it is impossible to conceive anything more fatal to Christianity, deserves our particular attention. Having during the last winter evenings, directed your attention to the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, it will only be necessary for me on the present occasion, to beseech of you to look at the consequences of such an hypothesis. If Christ possessed two perfectly distinct natures—perfect manhood and perfect Deity, then he certainly must have had two distinct minds, and consequently two distinct persons; a being this, which even the most mystery-loving mind cannot acknowledge. But then the Trinitarian asserts that though Christ had two natures, yet he was but one person, and consequently had but one mind. Observe then, Christ must have had but one mind if he were but one person; but how can this be made consistent with his possessing two distinct natures, the



divine and human?—only by supposing that both minds were in fact, so blended together, as to make but one. Now this being the case, it is evident, that what the Divine mind had power to do, or knew, a similar power and knowledge must have been possessed by the human mind in Christ, on account of the close connexion between the two minds, so that it was impossible for our Lord to make declarations in one nature, which he could not do in his other nature—for instance, He could not, consistently with truth, declare his ignorance of the day of judgment—because his human mind, which dictated this assertion of ignorance, from its close and intimate connexion with the divine mind, which did know all things, must have been acquainted with whatever the divine mind knew. Now the sum of our argument is this—If Christ had two natures in one person, they must have been so connected, the divine and human must have been so blended, that what the one could do or know, the other could *do*, and know likewise, but if this intimate union of minds did not exist, if they were so distinct, so separate, that the one mind possessed no influence over the other, then our blessed Saviour was to all intents and purposes, a being possessed of two distinct minds, and consisted of two distinct persons. Now look at the consequences of this doctrine of the two natures in Christ. On account of the intimate union which must have existed between these two natures, in order that they might constitute one person, as the attributes of the divine must have imparted to the human mind, it then follows, and we cannot avoid the consequence, and we state it reverently. If Christ was *God* as well as *man*, when he asserted his ignorance of the day of judgment, he asserted a fact in one sense, which he did not know in another sense!! for as *God*, he was *omniscient* and did know all things. And can we as Christians for one moment entertain a doctrine which destroys the integrity of him on whose lips guile was never found; forbid it Reason and Faith. Again, look at the request made to him by the mother of Zebedee's children—in his most exalted character, in that capacity, whatever it might be, in which

he possessed the highest power, and yet in this state of exaltation, he could not grant the request of the mother of those children ; that is, say Trinitarians, He could not do so, in his human capacity, but if our Lord spoke sometimes as God, and at other times as man—sometimes with a divine authority and sometimes as an uninspired mortal, how are we to know when he spoke as God, and when he spoke as mere man ? How are we to distinguish when we are to receive his doctrine as divine revelation, and when as human instruction ? When our Lord uses the pronoun *I*, how are we to know when he means his divine, and when he refers to his human nature ? We do think that the doctrine of our Lord's two natures, actually impeaches his veracity. What scope it affords for tampering with his words—for if there be a particular moral precept which may not accord with a man's desire and judgement—can he not escape the applying such an injunction, by saying that it was evidently spoken by our Lord in his human capacity and not in his divine nature. Thanks be to God, *Unitarians* entertain no such views of their Saviour, but maintain that he *always* spoke under divine inspiration. To say that Christ was actually the *Supreme Deity* in a *human form*, is to make God a material being ; to us it appears to degrade the high and the lofty One, whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, into a mere mortal man. We cannot admit a doctrine that so totally destroys the spirituality of the Deity, that robs him of those sublime attributes which Scripture every where ascribes to him, by placing him upon a level with the gross divinities of heathen superstition. Such my friends are some of the consequences attendant on the doctrine of Christ's two natures, consequences which form a sufficient argument for rejecting at once the doctrine entirely. We reject the doctrine of the *Deity of Christ*, on the same ground that Protestants reject the doctrine of transubstantiation—on account of its serious consequences. We may be contradicted, but cannot be proved to be in error, when we assert, that no text can be produced from scripture so strong in support of Christ's Deity, as can be



adduced from the same authority, in favour of the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine at the Lord's supper. "Take, eat, saith he, for this is my body;" and of the wine, he said, "drink ye all of this, for this is my blood." Again, he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."—John 6c. Can language be more explicit than this? Why then, we ask, does not the Protestant receive this doctrine of transubstantiation. Oh! he exclaims it is an absurdity—it is contrary to reason and to common sense. Reason and common sense replies the Catholic, what have they to do in the matter? you ought to prostrate your understanding before the word of God, the doctrine is a mystery, and should be received with reverence and humility. "What! when your feeble intellect cannot understand the simplest process of nature, will you presume to reject a doctrine expressly revealed in scripture, because it is contrary to reason? Presumptuous arrogance!" Now why is not the Protestant Trinitarian consistent? Why does he implicitly receive the Trinity and the doctrine of Christ's two natures, which cannot be reconciled with reason, because they are mysteries, and therefore not to be questioned, while he refuses to believe in transubstantiation, though expressed in scripture, because forsooth he considers the doctrine opposed to reason and common sense? Surely the conversion of bread and wine into flesh and blood, is not more opposed to reason than is the doctrine that three persons co-equal, co-existent, and co-eternal, make but one God; or the existence of a being that combines in one person, the contradictions of *omniscience* and *ignorance*, *omnipotence* and *weakness*, *dependency* and *independency*, *mortality* and *immortality*. Before the Trinitarian urges upon the Unitarian the duty of prostrating his understanding, and of implicitly receiving mysteries, let him remember his own rejection of the mysterious, and if scripture be *literally interpreted*, revealed doctrine of transubstantiation. We will now direct your attention to other passages of scripture, which are supposed to afford evidence of the

Deity of Christ. The 10c. 30v. of John, where it reads “ I and my Father are one ;” is generally quoted to shew that the Father and Son are one *being or essence*. But our Saviour when he found the Jews charging him with making himself God, repels it, by declaring that he only assumed the title of the *son of God*; surely he could not have blasphemed by calling himself the *son* of God, when David applied the high title of *Gods* even to earthly rulers. Our Lord’s meaning in the 30v. is explained by the preceding verses, when he says “ I give my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of *my* hand ;” then he adds “ My Father who *gave them* me, is *greater than all*, and none is able to pluck them out of my *Father’s* hand ;” to which he also adds “ I and my Father are one, my wishes and will with respect to my sheep are identified with those of my Father, and what I will concerning them, the Father wills also.” If, however, some will still insist that the expression “ I and my Father are one,” implies identity of essence, or that *Christ is God* as well as man, then we may insist on interpreting the words in 17c. of John 21, 22, and 23 verses, *literally*, as affirming that the Apostles were of the same nature and essence as the Father and the Son. And so ought the Apostles’ words in 1 Cor. 3c. 6 and 8v. to be so understood. Our Lord’s words in the 14c. of John 9v. “ He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” are brought forward to prove Christ’s Deity—that when Philip looked on the Saviour, he really beheld God himself—but a literal interpretation of the Saviour’s words in this verse, will destroy the veracity of other portions of scripture which declare that *God* is a *spiritual* and not a *material* being—that he is invisible, that no man can *see God and live*. Hence then the words “ He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” must not be understood literally, but as implying that the *wisdom*, the *power* and *goodness* of God, were *manifested* in the Gospel—and only in this or in a similar sense *can* the words be understood. Observe the language of the Apostle John, 1c. 18v. “ No man hath seen God at any time—the only begotton son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath

declared him." Again, in the 2c. 6v. of Philippians, "Who being in the *form* of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." But how can our Saviour's being in the *form* or resemblance of God, mean that he was *really* God? If a literal interpretation of this verse be insisted upon, then we have a right to insist that when the Scriptures assert that *man* is made in the *image* or resemblance of God that they are to be understood as affirming that *man* is *God*, which no one will surely admit. If being in the *form* of God constituted the Saviour, *God Almighty*, in what sense can it be said, that "He was made in the *likeness* of men; and if he was God Almighty, how could he die the death of the Cross, and be exalted *by* God?" This passage rather favours than opposes the Unitarian's view of the *person* of Christ. There is a passage in the 9c. of Romans 5v., sometimes quoted as favouring the hypothesis that Christ is God; "Whose are the Father's and of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." The learned Dr. Clark admits this passage may be thus rendered "God who is over all, be blessed for ever." Cooke reads it thus "Christ is come who is over all, God be blessed for ever, Amen." It is worthy of observation that some of our received translations omit the verb *to be*, while others have the *verb* printed in Italics. It is well known that the *verb* is frequently *omitted* in the *Greek*, and supplied in the English translation. The Apostle's language appears to be that of a pious ejaculation, blessing God for the power and authority he had bestowed on Christ. A similar ejaculation is to be found in Romans 1c. 25v. "Who served the creature more than the creator, who is blessed for ever:" and in 2 Cor. 11c. 31v. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not." And we think, were Christians seriously to consider these words of the Apostles "Christ came who is over all, God be blessed for ever;" they would hesitate before they asserted that the Apostle intended to teach that Jesus Christ was the eternal God. Is it credible that St. Paul meant to say, that a being who was of Jewish descent



was the supreme God. “ Whose are the Father’s, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came ;” can this be the eternal God ? can a long line of Jewish genealogy *end* in the birth of the Almighty Sovereign of the universe ? We are always directed to the first five verses of John, by Trinitarians, as evidence of the Deity of Christ. They affirm that the *logos, or word* was our *Saviour*, but surely this method of interpreting the term *word*, is arbitrary, inasmuch as it attaches personality to the term *word*, and thus increasing the difficulty of understanding the language of the evangelist. To admit such a rendering of Logos, would oblige us to interpret the language of John thus—In the beginning there was a Being, and this Being was *with God*, and this Being *was God*—Now if the *word* be a *person*, and if this person was *with God*, it is very obvious that the *word* cannot be Jesus himself; and the very Being with whom he dwelt. There is a plain *distinction* between *God* and the *word*, such as *obliges* Unitarians to depart from the customary method of understanding the word to mean a *person*. Having met with the following paraphrase on the introductory verses of John, it is submitted to your serious consideration. “ In the beginning, *i. e.* before all things, at least before all things of which I am about to write, *was the word*, that life-giving and supernatural energy which we have witnessed; which our eyes have seen, and our hands have handled, in attending on the ministry of Jesus. *This* divine power or principle *was in the beginning with God*, inherent in his nature, and operative in all his mighty works. Nay *the word was God*, it was nothing else than himself, it was a part of his own nature, inseparable and undistinguishable from him. But as I was saying *this word*, which we saw manifested, *was in the beginning with God, all things were made* or brought into being *by it, and without it*, without its agency, *was not any thing made that has been made. In it was life*, it was the principle of all natural or physical life; but not only so, there was in it a principle of life immortal, ready to quicken mankind

from death ; it was the eternal life which was with the Father, and which was manifested unto us ; we saw the graves opened and the dead restored. We saw Jesus himself, the first born out of death, ascend to immortality. *And the life was the light of men* ; this life-giving energy was as the light of morning, dispelling the darkness of night ; affording the glorious prospect of the resurrection ; abolishing the gloomy terrors of death : it was also the true spiritual light of the soul, overcoming within it, the darkening influence of sin ; enlightening and cheering both the understanding and the heart. *And the light shineth in darkness* ; the enlightening energy of God, was putting itself forth in Jesus, *and yet the darkness*, the moral darkness of the prejudiced and sinful world, *comprehended or apprehended it not*. Men did not recognize or regard it. It was however the divine purpose that it should be regarded. And to this end, *there came a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a testimony that he might testify, concerning the light, that through him all men might believe. He was not himself the light* ; it was not in *his* person, that this extraordinary heavenly light, or energy dwelt, *but he came that he might testify concerning the light. That light was the true light, that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the World* ; it was the true light of every rational creature ; it was God ; the good, the great, the unchangeable God ; the fountain of light uncreated ; the soul of the universe ; the sun of the intelligent creation. This is the message that we have heard—that God is *light*, and in him is no darkness at all. Yes, *He*, the blessed God, the Father of all, *was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not*. He came as it were to *his own, his own* house or family, *but his own people*, the Jews, *received him not*. But as many as received him, he gave them the privilege of being made the children of God, even to those who believed on his name. Behold then, what love the Father hath shewn us, that we should be children of God. Therefore, the World knoweth us not, because it



knew him not. It knew him not, when he graciously visited us, and dwelt among us, in the person of his Son. In this manner was God manifested in the flesh. Having considered some of the strongest passages of scripture, which are supposed to teach our Lord's two-fold nature, and equality with God, and cannot from these see the least argument in favour of that view of our Saviour, maintained by our Trinitarian brethren, we must now draw this lecture to a close, regretting that we cannot notice those passages of holy writ, which we feel persuaded form the most decisive evidence in favour of our Lord's inferiority to God his Father; but not without offering a few remarks in reference to the question propounded in our text. "What think ye of Christ? We believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ that should come into the World, the glorious person foretold by Moses and the Prophets. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and not God himself, the Saviour and the Mediator between God and man. That He did no sin, that never man spake like him—that God gave not the spirit by measure to him—that the Father sanctified and sent him into the world—that he anointed him with the holy spirit and with power, and that Jesus went about doing good. We believe that God was with Christ in all his labours, instructions and sufferings—that Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin,—that the doctrines he taught were true—that his precepts are pure and just—that his miracles are proofs of his divine mission—that his prophecies have been and will be fulfilled—that he always did those things which pleased the Father—that he had such a knowledge of the Father, such communications from the Father, such communion with God, as to justify him in saying, "I and my Father are one, he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." Unitarians believe that Jesus Christ is, *except* the Father, the most glorious being mankind have ever known—worthy to be honoured, loved, trusted, and obeyed, but not to be worshipped as God supreme. We believe he is the way, the truth, the resurrection and the life; the light of the world, and the glory of God :

that *He* has the words of eternal life, that *He* was betrayed, condemned, scourged, crucified, dead, and buried—that *He* rose again from the dead, by the power of God—that *He* ascended to Heaven, and now sitteth on the right hand of God. We believe that all our prayers should be offered to the Father, *in the name of Jesus Christ*—that we should possess the mind and spirit of Christ, and imitate his holy example—that Christ came into the world, because he was sent by the Father, to redeem mankind from the tyranny of base passions—from evil enticements, from sinful lusts, and thus to save sinners: that he came to reconcile sinners to God, to teach mankind to love God, to obey him, to urge upon mankind the necessity of offering themselves as living sacrifices to God, and to look to God for pardon and eternal life and joy. This my friends, is what Unitarians think of Christ. Why then should other Christians speak falsely of us, and say we deny Christ,—that we do not believe in him, and that we trust to a *mere man* for salvation, when *they know* as well as ourselves, that we believe Christ to be the Son of God, but not God himself: when they know that we teach, that we must, in this life, conform ourselves to his holy and spotless life, ere we can be rendered meet for the society of the saints in light. All Unitarians believe that Christ shall come a second time on the earth, and call all men to a righteous judgment; and then shall come the end, when he, *i. é.* Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power. For Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet—the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, for he hath put all things under his feet; but when he shall have put all things under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, *i. e.* *God* who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him, *i. e.* *God*, that put all things under him, that *God* may be all in all. We heed not the misrepresentations of men, nor the harsh antichristian denunciations of the bigot; we

know in whom we trust, and our religious views lead us to cherish the animating hope, that if we transform ourselves into the image of our blessed Saviour, when he shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.

## LECTURE III.

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### ORIGINAL SIN.

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*Ezek. xviii. 20.*

THE SOUL THAT SINNETH IT SHALL DIE. THE SON SHALL NOT BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHER, NEITHER SHALL THE FATHER BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE SON: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE UPON HIM, AND THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED SHALL BE UPON HIM.

WE have arrived at a very important and interesting stage of our religious inquiries, *viz.* the doctrine of "Original Sin." On this subject we have read various works, such as *King's*, *Edwards's*, *Calvin's*, *Soame Jenyns's*, without, however, being able to satisfy our minds on so grave a subject. The latter author is, we think, nearer the truth than either of the others, by partly admitting the ultimate utility of evil, and that its permission is not altogether inconsistent with the character of God, as an infinitely wise and merciful governor of the world. But we have observed, that most popular writers on "Original Sin," appear to have written under the scholastic prejudice, that there is some other than divine power in operation to produce evil. Their very first axiom appears to be, "It cannot be from God," and having received this as a demonstrated truth, they proceed to draw therefrom, conclusions most whimsical and illogical. But, before we

notice the doctrine of Original Sin, permit us to look for a moment at our own *origin*, as such a view may probably give us some idea of the origin of evil. It does appear to us, that when man comes into being, he comes without knowledge or experience; that he has no memory of the past, and no foresight of the future; that he has no idea of consequences, and that wisdom and folly are the same to him. How can he perceive any difference, seeing that his intellect is not developed but by time. Is it not certain that man's intellectual and moral character go hand in hand? That less or more of what we call virtue, is expected in proportion to the understanding of the agent? And does it not, moreover, appear, that as soon as man began to act, he began to sin, and also to acquire experience or knowledge of right and wrong—good and evil. Is it not evident, that from the first moment the mind of man began to be exercised, that then sin and knowledge, or more properly speaking, ignorance and knowledge, came together; and if so, was it possible for man to have acquired knowledge, but by passing through the ordeal of ignorance. And surely it must be allowed, that all our knowledge is acquired by experience, which is invariably preceded by ignorance and error. Hence then, we argue that if man was originally created a *pure* and *perfect* being, by an infinitely wise God, his liability to err was impossible; but, as it is universally admitted, that man did err in violating an injunction of the Almighty, as in the case of Adam's transgression, we cannot but conclude, that the first man Adam, was not made absolutely perfect. That this mode of reasoning on man's origin should be deemed carnal and presumptuous by some, will not surprise us; because, to such, reason is always offensive, except when employed in defence of any of their own peculiar notions. But we believe that the Creator has bestowed on man, faculties not only to observe phenomena, but to trace cause and effect, and has so constituted the external world as to afford *scope* to these powers; we are entitled, therefore, to say, that God himself has commanded us



to observe and enquire into the causes that prompt us to act, and the results that will naturally follow, and hence to modify our conduct according to the discoveries which we may make. The simple fact that the Almighty has bestowed upon man, reason, capable of looking into his own nature, and discovering its relations to external objects, is proof enough, if none more could be had, that God intended his creature man to exercise his mental as well as his physical powers ; that in doing which he might not only become better acquainted with his own capacities and qualities, but to frame institutions adapted to insure him happiness. It must be evident, to every reflecting mind, that man possesses moral and physical powers, which he is bound by the strongest laws of gratitude to exercise to their utmost, so that he may carry forward that grand design which Omnipotence has in view respecting him, *viz.* the perfectibility of his nature. But it is time, my friends, to enquire into the doctrine of “ *Original Sin,*” and with a view to ascertain its reasonable and scriptural foundation, it will be necessary to state the doctrine as it is generally taught by its advocates. They teach that when the Almighty created Adam, he gave him a nature perfect in holiness and righteousness, but by his transgressing a positive injunction of God, he lost the original purity of his nature, and became utterly corrupt and morally depraved. They teach that because Adam *sinned*, that therefore all his descendants are born into the World, inheriting his nature in its fallen state ; and that, without the grace of God, man has only the power to do evil, and consequently every *infant* that is born into the World is from the corrupt nature it derives from Adam, deserving of God’s wrath and eternal damnation ; that man has no power of doing anything pleasing in the sight of God ; that his every faculty and principle of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity to God ; that both the understanding and the will are under the reigning power of this *enmity*, and that all the affections are governed by *enmity* against God ; nay, it teaches that man cannot possibly *obtain* God’s favour, or

even has the power, independent of what is called *regenerating grace*, of successfully seeking to obtain it; that man without this super-added principle of grace from above, without a change wrought in him by an *eternal agent*, can neither *repent, believe, love, or obey*. Surely the bare statement of the doctrine is only necessary for its refutation; it would be difficult to bring our minds to believe that such views could be honestly and thoroughly cherished or entertained by rational beings, as the doctrine of holy Scripture, did we not know that men not only believe in it, but assert that it is taught in the Scriptures and justified by an appeal to reason and experience. However as Unitarian Christians, we presume to deny both these propositions, and contend first, that Scripture gives no authority for believing that man's nature was originally pure. That Adam was created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, Scripture no where asserts; but catechisms we know do. What then do the Scriptures say upon this subject? In Gen. 1c. 26v., they say God created man in his own image—but in what respect he was the image of God, does not immediately appear. If it be argued that in Gen. 5c. 3v., Adam begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image, and that as this must mean that Adam's son, had the same nature as his Father, so we must conclude that when the same expression is used respecting Adam's creation—when it is said he was created after the image and likeness of God, it means that his nature was the same as that of his Creator's, and was in all respects perfect. Now if this analogical reasoning be adopted, it must lead to erroneous conclusions; for then we must believe that Adam was in all respects *a God*, but that the expression *image of God* does not mean that *Adam* perfectly resembled his maker, because, 1st, by his eating of the forbidden fruit he acquired a knowledge which he had not at his creation; a knowledge too, which was before confined to God or to divine natures. Thus after Adam's partaking of the tree of knowledge, God is represented saying, "Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil," by which it is

evident that what Adam had done, made him nearer than he was in his original state, to the divine nature—2ndly, because Adam's nature did not perfectly resemble that of God, being mortal, and subject to death, for immediately after the words above quoted, *it is added*, “And now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever, therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground, whence he was taken,” Gen. 3c. 22, 23v. Nothing can be more decisive than these words are in proof of Adam's possessing originally a *mortal* nature. Here then are two particulars stated, in which man's nature as *originally* formed was inferior to the *divine*, first as it regards knowledge, secondly in being mortal. Hence we are justified in concluding, that when it is said God created man in his own image, the expression must be understood in a *limited* sense, and not in the *same* sense in which it is used with regard to *Adam's* offspring, being the image of their Father. If it be said that the expression does not mean that Adam's resemblance to his Creator was *perfect*, that he was the image of God in all the essential attributes of Deity, but only that he resembled him in his *moral* perfections, in true holiness of character, we answer, there is no foundation in any scriptural expression for this distinction. It is an assertion without proof. The expression “made in the image or likeness,” is very *indefinite*, for a thing may be very like to another in one respect, and yet totally unlike it in many *others*. Two interpretations, and both probable, have been given of this phrase, the first is, that man's being made in the image of God, means as to his intelligent nature, his rational faculties, endowments, by which the rest of the animal creation is not distinguished. The second is, the expression may mean that man resembles his maker in the power and authority he exercises over the lower creation, and what makes this last interpretation exceedingly probable, is, that in Gen. 1c. 26v., it is first said, “Let us make man in *our own image*, after our likeness; then it is added, and let them have domin-



ion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth ;” and then it is subjoined in the next verse, “ so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.” This interpretation is further corroborated by the 8th Psalm, “ Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet.” There can be little doubt that man’s resemblance to his Creator consisted in being invested with exalted power and authority, over the rest of creation. If to these interpretations the objection be made that they are only conjectures, remember the commonly received notion of man’s being formed in the image of God’s moral perfections is a conjecture also, and one which has not the authority from Scripture that the others have which we have given. Again, if it be urged that it is said, God saw every thing that he had made, and pronounced it good, we answer, the term *good* cannot be understood as implying *moral perfection*, for it is applied to every thing, such as the sun, moon, and stars ; to inanimate objects, and also to the brute creation, to neither of which can the term goodness be applied in the sense of holiness or virtue : we must understand the epithet *good* in another sense, and it is one in which it is frequently used, *viz.* to signify the fitness or propriety of a thing for its intended purpose ; for instance, we say of food, when wholesome and nourishing, it is good ; in this sense, *man* was good, as was every thing the Deity had created—man then was *good*, adapted to the state for which he was intended ; this state, we believe, is generally allowed to be one of *trial* and *probation*, from which circumstance alone, *Adam’s nature* could not have been perfect. If it had not been frail, and yielding to temptation, Adam could not have been a fit subject for a probationary state, or progressively improving state. There is a passage quoted from Eccles. 7c. 29v. as proving the perfection of man’s original nature, “ Lo, this only have



I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions." To say nothing of the questionable nature of this authority, for the intention of *Solomon* in writing his *Ecclesiastes* cannot be satisfactorily determined; some have thought he writes not in his own person, but in that of a man of the world disgusted with a life of pleasure; let this be as it may, *Solomon* does not say God *had* made man originally upright, and that he is now depraved, but *hath* or *has* made man upright, evidently meaning that every man is born with a power of being upright. *Solomon* denies the natural depravity of man, and intimates that no man has been made devoid of a virtuous principle. Again, when we consider the material out of which *Adam* was made, the *dust of the earth*, it is an argument against the perfection of man's original nature. The material out of which man was made is often alluded to in the Scriptures, as significant of man's frailty; for instance, when *Abraham* interceded for the inhabitants of *Sodom*, *Gen.* 18c. 27v. he said, "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes;" as much as to say, "It is presumptuous for so frail and weak a creature as myself, attempting to cause Omnipotence to alter his purposes." And the weakness of man's natural condition seems plainly alluded to in the curse uttered against *Adam*, *Gen.* 3c. 19v. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken, for *dust thou art*, and unto dust shalt thou return." The same inference may be drawn from the use of the word *flesh*, which it will not be denied that *Adam* possessed in common with ourselves. The Lord said, "my spirit shall not *always* strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*," *i.e.* of a frail nature, *Gen.* 6c. 3v. But the strongest argument against the perfection of *Adam's* moral character, is derived from the fact (and facts are stubborn things) of his fall. The very circumstance of *Adam's* yielding to the first temptation by which he was assailed, is a decisive proof that his virtue was deficient in strength. To use the language of *Dr. Cogan*, *vide* Second Letter to

Wilberforce, p. 47, "Adam's temptation was scarcely beyond the powers of a schoolboy to resist." The easy seduction of *Adam* and *Eve* is totally irreconcilable with that purity of character arbitrarily ascribed to them. But we ask, admitting that Adam and Eve had really possessed this elevation of nature, how could they display it. In what scenes could they mingle so as to call into exercise their numberless virtues? In the infant state of the world, when the first pair were its only inhabitants, what were their temptations to fraud, oppression, deceit, and avarice? What in this state was there to incite anger, jealousies, envyings, lawless ambition, and implacable malice? Placed in a garden replenished with delights, and in a world where every thing that was new, grand, and wonderful, burst upon their sight, must not the lowest of their degraded sons have felt an impulse of admiration, love, and gratitude? Where then, are the evidences of a superiority which could render our first parents a different class of beings from their offspring? What proofs that they were qualified, by the transcendency of their intellectual and moral powers, to associate with angels, or hold special communion with God? Again, what right have we, as Christians, to conclude, that the animal placed in the garden and which tempted Eve, was Satan, when learned men cannot decide amongst themselves whether the animal was a *serpent*, an *ape*, or the devil. But setting aside the speculations of men concerning the nature of the animal which tempted Eve, we are willing to be guided by the Mosaic account of the fall as it is called, which declares not a word about *Satan*, but that a *serpent* beguiled Eve through its subtlety. The serpent is represented as possessing the faculty of speech, and it assures Eve, that the threatened consequences of her disobedience to God's command, should not take place; she listens to the serpent's story—obeys its suggestions—eats of the fruit, and giving some to Adam, he does not scruple to follow her evil example. This is the account of the temptation and the fall, which is a strong proof of its being an allegori-

cal account of the disobedience of our first parents. But as many Christians are not willing to admit its allegorical character, we will consider the account as it is recorded in the Old Testament, and from which we perceive, and we think every unprejudiced mind must do so, that considering the little persuasion employed to deceive Eve, *perfection* formed no part of human nature before the fall; that it was evidently characterized by the same frailty and imperfection then, which it now exhibits. “How many instances might be produced from the history of heathens, who have displayed far greater strength of virtue—far nobler fortitude in resisting temptation under circumstances too, much less favourable to the preservation of integrity, than was exhibited by Adam and Eve in Paradise.” “If when our first parents could so *readily* yield to the first temptation, and that by no means a *strong* one—when the *powerful* nature of the circumstances that should have prevented their yielding to it, are duly considered, they are yet to be viewed as having been created with a perfect nature: we can only say that those who still think thus of the nature of Adam and Eve, have a very different idea of perfection, to that which we cherish.” So far from human nature having *degenerated* since the fall, we cannot but think that if any change has taken place in it, it has greatly *improved*: that those who sprang from righteous Noah and his family, had a superior nature to that which Adam derived from his original constitution. “Look at faithful Abraham, the friend of God as he was called, how he was tried!” What was Adam’s trial of obedience, compared to that of the son of Terah, who was commanded to sacrifice with his *own hand*, the son of his old age, “and his only son,” for Ishmael had been torn from him, and sent to dwell in a distant land; recollect the command, and observe how it was obeyed. Can we contemplate the trial to which the parent was doomed, distant as the time and place of the event may be, without the strongest sympathy. Can we represent to ourselves the innocence and simplicity of the unsuspecting youth, without

feeling the tenderest pity ; or imagine the grief, repugnance, and horror, of the affectionate parent, without participating in his distress ? Alas, what a command was this ! And what a proof was here of sincere faith, or confidence in the wisdom of God's commands. Talk of Adam's trial and Eve's temptation, they are not worthy of being compared with that of the Patriarch's. And be pleased to recollect, that Abraham was one of the descendants of fallen Adam. From the evidence before us, the conclusion we are compelled to draw is, that man was not made *perfectly holy* and upright ; that in whatever sense he was made in the image of God, it cannot mean in the moral perfection of his nature, of which there is not a shadow of proof—all the proof lies the other way. From the Scripture account it is evident that man's *original nature* was the same as it now is ; that he was not formed perfect, but frail and imperfect ; that his nature was of a mixed character, containing virtuous and vicious principles, *i.e.* capable of virtue, but liable to sin ; and this is no imputation on divine goodness or justice ; for if Adam was good, *i.e.* adapted to the state in which he was placed, a state of trial and probation, as we believe every man now to be in, he could not have been absolutely perfect ; because, where there is a *trial* there must be a capability of yielding to temptation, or it is no trial ; and where there is a *capability* of *sinning*, there cannot be absolute perfection. Had the nature of our first parents been perfect in holiness and righteousness, like that of God, they could no more have been tempted, than God himself can be tempted. But it is to be feared that few Christians, when maintaining the original purity of Adam, consider the intimations of Scripture, respecting the dealings of God towards man, but yet it ought not to be over-looked by us, that the supreme Being has placed his creatures under different states of trial and probation under which their virtue may be exercised, and their character formed and improved for a yet purer and happier state of existence. Thus we see that man, or at least a portion of mankind, has been placed under four



probationary states; first, the dispensation under which Adam lived in Eden; the second, the patriarchal dispensation; the third, the Mosaic dispensation; and the fourth, the Christian dispensation: of these four it must be evident to a child, that the first probationary state was the easiest, and the following, progressively more severe. Having stated our objections to the received doctrine, that *Adam* was created perfectly holy, and fell from his holiness; and having also stated our reasons for believing, that *Adam's* nature was like that of other human beings, because he was tempted and sinned, we beg leave, before we pass on, to consider the doctrine of human depravity, (a very near relative to the doctrine of original sin,) to say a few words on the progressive improvement of man's nature. Judging from experience, we have, in spite of the gloomy views of by-gone ignorance, and of narrow-minded men, every thing to encourage us to believe that human nature has not retrograded, but that it has progressed in knowledge, and is daily improving;—we cannot believe that infinite wisdom should have made us for no other purpose, “but to drag after us here, for a few years, the galling chain of moral degradation,” and this because he suffered *Adam* to sin. But let us appeal to facts;—has the human race been gradually getting worse? let facts decide, not minute, partial, isolated events, but the broad facts of universal history; was the human race ever in a state of mental and moral improvement superior to the present? If so, we beg to be shown the record which will justify such a conclusion; and whether, if such a record can be shown, it argues in favour of the Gospel of Christ, diffused, as it now is, over so large a portion of the world? When was human nature more dignified than it now is, owing as we believe, to the spread of Gospel truth, and its purifying influences on the human mind? Was it in the infant state of the world, when man was scarcely distinguished, but by name, from his fellow-tenants of the earth?—when his language was little more than inarticulate sounds, and the summit of his science to construct a rude hut to shelter him from the storm, and to procure a few roots, his

highest happiness? Is it not true that the nearer we approach the age of the *primeval pair*, the more savage and degraded man appears to be? If this statement should appear to any persons a matter of doubt, their doubts, we think, will be removed, if they will take the trouble to read M. De Condorcet, on the progress of the human mind. “In the early period of man’s history, we learn that he had no abiding place. His occupation was chiefly war, or hunting; his religion, the worship of stars or clouds, and his law physical power. Was it when civilization was confined to a few states in Greece, and when three-fourths of the people were slaves, holding life at the caprice of others, who in their turn were the slaves of ignorance, and the dupes of priestcraft—was it in this stage of the world that human nature was nearer perfection? Look at it in the best days of Rome, Imperial Rome, as she called herself, when she was polluted with domestic slavery, and waging continual war with the world—rude in arts—with *no philosophy*—and a religion, whose gods and religious ceremonies make one blush for human nature;” can you turn back the hand on the dial of time, and make it point to a season when human nature was more improved than now? Let it be remembered that whilst memory travelled over more than four thousand years of the history of man, it could not light upon an age more dignifying to human nature than the present. We regret that we must conduct you down from this eminence, on which it is delightful for the contemplative Christian to stand and watch the progressive improvement of human nature, into the gloomy valley of religious error, to proceed with the enquiry, whether in consequence of Adam’s fall, man’s nature became utterly corrupt and depraved, or that owing to this fall all his descendants have imbibed from him his corruption and depravity. In consulting Scripture on this doctrine, we naturally refer at once to the account which it gives of the consequences which attended Adam’s fall, and this it has done most explicitly, Gen. 3c. 17v. “Unto Adam God said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying thou shalt not

eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground, for out of it wast thou taken—for dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.” Now, where in this passage is the doctrine to be found, of the moral corruption of Adam’s nature after his fall? God does not say his *nature* shall become *innately* depraved, but only that *it* shall be subject to *death*. In that day thou eatest thereof thou shalt *surely die*, *i. e.* at a certain period, because he did not immediately die. Those who advocate the doctrine of original sin, interpret this denunciation of death to mean not a *natural*, but a *spiritual* death—not a bodily decay, but a corruption of the moral nature. But where is there any authority for this assumption? Surely the expression “thou shalt return unto the ground whence thou wert taken,” cannot be understood otherwise than as referring to the actual death of *Adam*, *i. e.* the loss of animal life. And the words “dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return,” cannot reasonably be applied to a decay of moral powers, and to a deterioration of Adam’s moral character. If it be urged that man’s degeneracy of nature was produced by his eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we answer that there was evidently evil in Adam’s nature before he partook of the forbidden fruit, or he would not so easily have been tempted to disobey the express commandment of God. If, by obtaining the knowledge of *good* and *evil*, man lost the original purity of his *nature*, look to the conclusion of this doctrine, then *God’s* nature may be shewn to be, on the same evidence, *not pure*; how? because God is made to say, “Behold, the man is become as one of *us*, to know *good and evil*.” The knowledge of good and evil is possessed by the Deity himself. And if the evil which existed in *Adam’s nature* after the fall, is to be attributed to the knowledge which he acquired of evil, from tasting the forbidden fruit, it may with equal truth be asserted, that *Adam* poses-



sed no virtue till after he *ate the forbidden fruit*; for remember, the *tree* yielded the *knowledge of good*, as well as *evil*. There is not a shadow of evidence from the Scripture narrative of the fall, that *Adam's nature* became degenerate and corrupt by that event. The sentence of death was pronounced against him, which evidently is to be understood of the termination of his *existence*, and not of a *moral death*, or a degeneracy of his moral powers, which there is every reason to believe are the same in *man now*, as they were in the *first moment* of his existence. Again, it appears that Moses knew nothing of the doctrine of original *sin*, and this is somewhat remarkable, as he *narrates* the fall, and particularly as he is said to have been inspired. Had he known, he would certainly have mentioned it, as the consequences of *Adam's* degeneracy of nature, are far more awful to mankind, than those which the historian has recited. But we are referred for proofs of the doctrine of original sin, to the Apostle Paul, Rom. 5c. 12, and 19v.; “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” as by one man's disobedience, many were *made sinners*, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. As these verses, we know, are considered the most explicit—the most favourable to the doctrine in question, they deserve a calm examination. We have first to observe on these verses, that nothing is said in them of man acquiring an *innate* depravity, *i. e.* a *necessity of sinning*, because Adam sinned—what they teach is this, which all Unitarians believe, that through Adam's sin, death was first *announced* to the world, and that all men *have sinned*, observe!! *not have become innately depraved* and corrupt, but have sinned, and who denies this? And from the 19th verse, we learn that by Adam's fall, many, *not all*, became sinners, not innately depraved. The Apostle does not say man's sinning arose from an *irresistible necessity*, which the advocates for original sin maintain. We beg leave to notice another passage, which is considered to be an unanswerable argument for original sin. “Behold, I was



shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Now this is a part of a penitential psalm, composed by David, when feeling compunction for his horrid crimes of *adultery* and *murder*. But how can the language which an individual who had so grossly sinned, utters in the poignancy of bitter self reproach, be fairly applied to the *moral condition* of mankind in general? How does it apply to Simeon, who was a just and devout man—to *Nathaniel*, an Israelite without guile—to *Anna*, who served God with alms and prayers—to the Baptist's parents, who were righteous before God, and walked in his ordinances blameless—to the Roman Centurion, and to Cornelius, and to all the devout Greeks? It is well known that the expression "born in sin," was proverbial among the Jews, and used as a mark of ignominy and reproach, and in this sense it was applied to the man who was born blind, whose sight our Saviour had restored, "'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us.'"—John 9c. 34v. From the manner in which the haughty Pharisees applied this expression, it is evident they knew nothing of original sin, because the language would have been as applicable to their origin as to that of the blind man's. If this language of David's "Behold I was born in sin, shapen in iniquity," &c. is to be understood as teaching *original sin*, it is most extraordinary that he should have applied to himself such language as that recorded in the 119th Psalm. Do the advocates for the doctrine of original sin, consider its consequences? Do they not perceive, that if man, just out of the hands of his maker, could *sin*, that his nature could not have been *perfect*, and if man was made *perfect* as they affirm, was it possible for him to have sinned and become *imperfect*? Has man the power of altering that *nature* which God has given to him? If man is a sinner by birth, how can he be a free agent, and responsible for the consequences of his sinful nature? Respecting the language of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, 2c. 3v., "were by nature children of wrath, even as others," how can he be understood to teach the doctrine of hereditary depravity, when he declares in another place, that "the wrath of God is re-

vealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”—Rom. 1c. 18v. Look at the light in which the character of God is placed by this doctrine of “original sin,” it represents the Deity as first *making* all mankind *sinner*s from their *birth*; nay more, from their very *nature*; and then, as threatening them with his eternal displeasure for doing that which they could not avoid doing. “The word *nature* has various significations, and the precise idea to be affixed to it, can only be ascertained by the subject in question, or by circumstances relative to it.” The word *nature* was used in reference to the Ephesians, and to the whole gentile world, prior to their conversion to Christianity, and it points out the cause of their having been “children of wrath, even as others,” not on account of *Adam’s sin*, not on account of an original depravity derived from thence, but on account of their *own* transgressions, as the following language plainly shews, “ye walked in times past according to the course of this world, among whom also *we* all had our conversation in times past, and in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath *even as others*.” Read the whole of the second chapter of St. Paul to the Ephesians. We have not brought forward any passages of Scripture, favouring our own side of the question; but simply examined a few of the strongest passages in favour of the doctrines of original sin, and hereditary depravity. And now we shall conclude by stating six reasons why we do not believe in the popular doctrine of human depravity; or, that men are born sinners. First, it implies an impossibility. Sin, says the Apostle, is the transgression of the law, how then can we who came into life, blank ignorance at such a period, be transgressors? How can we be sinners by birth, when we are not then conscious even of the power to sin? Secondly, because as sin, it is said, cannot proceed from a holy nature, then, with as much propriety we add, neither can virtue proceed from an unholy nature. And, because the doctrine is contrary to the analogy of the rest of God’s works; for every other creature of God,

so far as our knowledge extends, is formed with a nature exactly adapted to the place it fills, and to the purposes of its being. And can it be believed, that God designed man for virtue, religion, and holiness, and then made him utterly incapable of becoming so. Thirdly, it destroys the very foundation of human accountability. When we see a fellow creature who has been blind from his birth, do we blame him, and despise him for being ignorant of letters? When we see the idiot raving in madness, and hear his shriek of wild wretchedness, do we resort to punishment? And yet, look at human depravity, and final punishment. Fourthly, we object to the doctrine because it casts reproach on the divine character and government. Can you not remember, when children, standing at a parent's knee, uttering these words to the parent's question, *who made you?* God "made me and all things." You must surely. "Have you forgotten the sweet emotions of confidence and love which filled your youthful bosoms, when some pious instructor taught you, who, and what God was? And in after life, when the consciousness of your own unworthiness has weighed down your spirits, and you have contemplated the sin of your fellow creatures with sorrow—when triumphant vice has cast its glare upon your pathway, and fraud, cruelty, and oppression, has stung your soul deeply, have you not felt it a blessed refuge to remember God. Have you not been comforted by the thought, that in him, virtue still had a friend, and innocence a protector; but alas, the doctrine of depravity takes away this last refuge, for it throws the pall of moral death over the tainted mass of society, and leaves only a few, a mere remnant of mankind, to be saved." Fifthly, the doctrine is inconsistent with the design of our present life, as probationary. If we are under the wrath and curse of God, and liable to the pains of Hell for ever, how can the days and years which may follow, be termed a season of probation? If we deserve Hell as soon as we are born, can we deserve more? Our doom is decided at the outset, and cannot be the consequence of a trial which it precedes—in



fact, to talk of trial here, is absurd. My friends, can you not find far back in early days, no sincere prayers, no pure desires, no good resolutions, no kindness for man, and no fear for God? Be it that you feel yourselves sinners, yea, the greatest of sinners, yet were you always as bad as you are now? Would your chance for salvation have been no better if you had died in infancy, than if you were summoned to day to appear before God? Admit this, and you give up native depravity, for that teaches, that all men are liable to eternal woe, as soon as they come into the world: more than this cannot be awarded. Lastly, the Scriptures afford us a far different view of human nature, from that presented by the doctrine we have attempted to refute. Does not the sacred volume contain many severe rebukes pointed at offenders? But rebuke, is that just where the offence could not be avoided? and is not the result of our own choice? Consider the numerous pathetic lamentations and remonstrances addressed in the name of God to his erring creatures. Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments—turn ye, for why will ye die; what could I have done more for my vineyard, that I have not done. How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth, &c. O! that thou hadst known, my people will not consider. Now such language is mere mockery of human woe, unless it was by their own conduct, the guilt lamented was incurred, and unless they had power to do otherwise. Why lament an evil which God himself had caused by bringing them into the world with a depraved nature, and which none but God can cure. The Scriptures take it for granted, that a man is a sinner only through his own act and choice. Every tree is known by its fruit, he that committeth sin transgresseth the law. “Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.” “The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be



upon him." To you, my Unitarian brethren, who view good and evil as important parts of God's moral administration—as means whereby he will produce a preponderance of good, may you continue to hold with the Apostle John, that *God is love*; that his agency is that of omnipotent benevolence. "Continue to cherish the delightful hope, that beyond the grave there is a better world for all. That God is no respecter of persons, but he who feareth God, will be &c., in that glorious day, when there shall be no more death—where they who now love and fear God, shall form one holy and blessed community with the good of all ages; and when the gates of Heaven will close only on that which would defile, embitter, or destroy. Then will the good pass on through successive eras of blessedness, each glowing with higher splendour, to that consummation of overwhelming glory, when shall be achieved the final triumph of Almighty love."

## LECTURE IV.

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### A T O N E M E N T .

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*Matthew xv. 23.*

THE SON OF MAN CAME TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM  
FOR MANY.

WE are in this Lecture to direct your attention to the doctrine of *the atonement*, said to be another of those doctrines, which, as Unitarians, we deny. Nothing is easier than for men to make assertions, but it is a gratifying fact that all Unitarians contend for *a doctrine of atonement*, and for that view of it, given by the sacred Scriptures themselves; but not for the doctrine of atonement as taught by many Christians, who say that Christ suffered as the sinner's substitute;

that he bore the punishment due to a sinful world, and thus by satisfying the divine justice, obtained the sinner's pardon and restoration to God's favour. In this view of our Saviour's death, he is said to have made satisfaction for the sins of the world, or to have *atoned* for them. The word atonement, according to its popular acceptance, conveys the idea of paying an *equivalent*, in the stead of what is justly *due*, the substitution of one thing, in the place of what can equitably be demanded. But the term *atonement*, applied in this sense to the death of Christ, is highly objectionable, because whatever may be the present signification of the expression, it is never employed in the popular sense of the word, in any part of the Bible. It is well known, that the word translated atonement, Rom. 5c. 11v. ought to have been translated "*reconciliation*;" in this opinion we have the testimony of such men as Dr. John Taylor, Archbishop Newcombe, Dr. Hey, and the present Bishop of Chichester, Dr. Maltby. "It would undoubtedly have been better," continues the latter divine, "if, in translating the same word when it meant the same thing, the same English term had been invariably used in our version; but in justice to our translators, it should be remarked, that the words atone and atonement, according to the then usage of our language, did express the notions now conveyed by reconcile and reconciliation." In this sense, the word was always used by the writers at, or near the time, when our version of the Scriptures was made, and is so explained in the margin of our authorized version. Knowing then, as we do, that the word atonement means *reconciliation*, and believing, as we do, that the great purpose for which Christ came into the world, was to reconcile sinners unto God, we not only admit the scriptural view of atonement, but feel it to be our duty to teach publicly, this cheering doctrine of the New Testament. The difference between our views, and the views which commonly prevail on this subject, it is true, is very considerable. But it is a difference of interpretation, not of acknowledgment, on the one side, and of denial on the other. The question is

not, whether there be a doctrine of atonement in the sacred writings, but whether they teach the *popular* doctrine of atonement. Christians of other persuasions have no more right to charge us with denying this doctrine, because our view of it differs from theirs, than we have to retort the charge upon them, because their view of it differs from ours. What we contend for is, that the *modern acceptance* of the word *atonement*, which implies a substitution of one thing for another, is not applicable to the term as used in the Bible. If, when the expression is employed in reference to our Lord's death and sufferings, it implies that Jesus died a substitute for sinners, or, that he suffered the wrath of God in the stead of sinners— when the term *atonement* is applied to our Lord's death in such a sense, we think, it is done without the authority of Scripture, for therein the expression atonement, invariably means a reconciliation. Observe, we are now speaking of the authority of the New Testament. But be pleased to bestow your patient attention, whilst we examine the word *atonement*, as frequently occurring in the *Old Testament*. In the Hebrew, it signifies a “*covering*,” and the term is evidently applied to those offerings, which the Jews were commanded to make to God, as a sign of their repentance of sins, and their desire to obtain divine mercy and forgiveness. If these offerings were made with a contrite heart, they met with divine acceptance, which implied that the supreme being no longer regarded the sin for which the offering was made, but considered it *covered* or *hidden* from his sight, *i.e.* that sinners, who had made such offerings, were reconciled to God. See the derivation of this word in Dr. Brown's Dictionary of the Bible, and Dr. Taylor's Key. In examining some passages in the Old Testament, in which the word atonement is used, it is necessary to observe, that the Jewish religion was remarkably ceremonial; that every part of worship, whether prayer, thanksgiving, or contrition, was accompanied by some symbolical act. It appears from the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, that one day in every year was appointed to be observed amongst

the Israelites, as a day of atonement, “ Also on this tenth day of the seventh month, there shall be a day of atonement ; it shall be a holy convocation unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering, made by fire, unto the Lord,” *i. e.*, a day to make a reconciliation for you before the Lord ; from which we learn that the people were to afflict or humble themselves, and to offer an offering by *fire*, which was to shew the searching and purifying nature of their repentance ; for *fire* resembles action as well as words. We find *atonements* were instituted for particular offences of individuals. On these occasions the offerings were always whatever the offerer was able to give : some would provide a lamb, others pigeons, others flour : with such materials the priest made an atonement for the sins of the individual, “and it shall be forgiven him,” Lev. 5c. 10v. No where do we find in these two cases any thing like the popular view of substituted punishment ? Are we to infer from these sacrifices that God received a portion of flour, or a lamb, or a *bird*, as a substitute for the punishment the sinner deserved ? or was it not rather an outward act of worship, accompanying the sinners confession, and to express more strongly his sorrow for, and repentance of sin ? There was another custom among the Jews, *viz.* taking a census of the people ; each person that was enrolled *twenty years old*, had to pay half a shekel for an atonement for his soul. This money was called a *ransom* for the soul, or an atonement money. Here it is evident the ransom money was offered as a token of dependance on God, as the author and preserver of life, and never considered as an equivalent, for the forfeited life of the sinner. Atonement money was offered by priests when inducted into the office of priesthood, which was a token of their need of cleansing from sin, to fit them for the exalted office on which they were about to enter. Atonement was made also for inanimate objects, connected with the service of God, in order to purify or cleanse them, Lev. 16c. 33v. “ And the priest shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the



tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and also he shall make an atonement for the priests, and all the people of the congregation," which plainly shews that the atonement for inanimate objects, is mentioned in connection with that for the priests and the people, a proof of their nature being the same; they were symbolical acts of worship, and not a substitution for punishment. At the consecration of Aaron and his sons, it is said, "Moses put the blood of the bullock upon the horns of the altar, round about with his finger, and purified the altar." Now the Hebrew word, translated purified, is literally "*unsinned*," *i. e.* took away the sins of the altar; now if the blood of a bullock can be said to take away the sins of the altar, without any substituted punishment being intended, which no one will surely assert, why may we not suppose that the sins of men can be taken away by the shedding of Christ's blood, without regarding the death of Christ as the infliction of the punishment due to mankind? In four instances of atonements mentioned in the Old Testament, each differing from any of the foregoing, made on special indications of God's displeasure, we do not find the idea of substituted punishment. We read in Exodus 32c., the Israelites incurred the displeasure of God by worshipping the golden calf, and Moses told them they sinned a great *sin*, and that he would go up unto the Lord, "peradventure" saith he, "I shall make an atonement," *i. e.* a reconciliation for your sin. Moses returned to the Lord and said, "O Lord this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt, forgive them their sin, if not blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Now, we ask, what atonement was made on this occasion, so as to restrain the effects of the divine displeasure?—evidently *confession and prayer*. In Numbers 16c., we find, a plague broke out among the people, after Korah's rebellion; then Aaron, by the direction of Moses, took a censer with fire and incense, and went forth into the midst of the congregation, and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people, and he stood between

the dead and the living, "and the *plague* was stayed." In this instance, it is self-evident that the atonement, or reconciliation, was effected by burning incense, accompanied no doubt, by confession and prayer. "The conduct of Phinehas in slaying Zimri, and the Midianitish woman whom he had introduced into the camp contrary to the divine command is called an atonement." The Lord said unto Moses, "Phinehas hath turned my displeasure away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy." Here the promise of an everlasting priesthood is made to him, because of his zeal for God, and for having made an *atonement* for the children of Israel. Here, the atonement was made by the *infliction of death*, but observe, it was the *guilty that died*, and not the *innocent*. Where then, in this *atonement*, do we find anything like the popular notion of Christ's suffering for the guilty—or the innocent suffering instead of the guilty? The atonement made by David for the Gibeonites in permitting them to hang seven of Saul's sons, was the destruction of the *guilty*, not the *innocent*, 2d, Sam. 24c. From the various forms of making atonements, in the Old Testament, in none of them do we find, that they were substitutes for punishment, or rather, as any transfer of the guilt of the offender, to the means or instrument of atonement. It is evident they were symbolical acts or forms of worship, and like other external forms, their acceptableness with God depended upon the disposition or temper of the worshipper. It was the sincerity of the worshipper's contrition and repentance that procured the atonement or reconciliation. The external act, was to add force or energy to the internal feeling of the worshipper. Having now examined the Old Testament writings, as far as time will permit, to ascertain the true meaning of the word *atonement*, and how far its use, among the Jews, can be applied to the modern doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, and having seen that the word atonement never conveyed the idea of a substitute for the punishment of sin, we will turn to the New Testa-

ment, to enquire whether those expressions, employed therein respecting the death of Christ, favour the notion of the punishment of the innocent, in the place of the guilty? In this enquiry, we shall compare spiritual things with spiritual, and thus endeavour to make the Scriptures their own interpreter. We find in the New Testament, that Christ is called “our passover, which was sacrificed for us.” And with reference to the paschal sacrifice, Jesus is said to be, the “Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world;” so the saints are represented, as having made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, and Christians are said to be redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.” Now the passover, be it remembered, was instituted as a memorial of God’s mercy, in sparing, or passing over the Israelites when he smote all the first-born of the Egyptians. Where then, in the paschal sacrifice, do we discover the divine anger, infinite wrath, and substituted punishment? The suffering connected with the sacrifice, was of a *preventive* nature; the lamb died, or suffered death, to *prevent* the Israelites from being involved in calamity. The sufferings of the lamb were not a substitute for the sufferings which might have been justly inflicted on the Israelites—they were only appointed means for the prevention of evil. Again, where do we find, in the paschal sacrifice, the least appearance of God’s wrath and vengeance? We behold with delight, manifestations of the Father’s mercy and goodness to the Israelites. Now why should the sufferings and death of Christ, the *Lamb of God*, be regarded as a manifestation of God’s wrath against him, as a substitute for a sinful world? Why not consider it rather an event, intended by its moral influences, to lead men from sin, and thus effect their reconciliation with God? The language previously quoted from the New Testament, is highly figurative, and denotes the benefits resulting to mankind from the death of Christ. No Christian, let his love of figurative language amount to fanaticism, can say he has literally washed his *robes* in the blood of



Christ, or been sprinkled with it; but Christ, by his death, has procured spiritual blessings for us, and the means of moral cleansing, and thus has obtained our redemption from sin and death. Again, in Eph. 5c. 1, 2, Christ is said to have given himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God, and in Heb. 9c. 5v. it is said, "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." In the Old Testament, we frequently read of *sacrifices* being offered; and the same remark will apply to them that is applicable to the *atonements* of the Mosaic law, *viz.* "that the Mosaic sacrifices were not substitutes for punishment, but acts of worship;—thus confession of sin, supplication for pardon, thanksgiving for mercies received, were accompanied by sacrifices. When these sacrifices were made with a heart corresponding with the purpose of the symbol, or *external action*, they were acceptable to God, and the means of procuring the divine favour; but like all external forms of worship, their acceptableness with God, depended on the disposition or temper of the worshippers." The death of the animal offered in sacrifice, was a striking symbolical act, admirably suited to impress the mind of the offerer with the fact, that his life being forfeited by sin it was his duty to repent:—but observe, the death of the victim could not be regarded as a *substitute* for the death of him who presented it, because he was still liable to die. "It was to him an *admonitory* symbol, not a *substitute* for his own death." It has been said that the Israelites considered their sacrifices types or symbols of the Messiah's sacrifice, but where is the proof that the Mosaic sacrifices were ever so regarded? The Jews never seem to have entertained any notion of their Messiah suffering as their substitute. Their sacrifices were acceptable, owing to the sincerity of mind in which they were offered; but where, in the Jewish writings, do we learn that their sacrifices were acceptable to God on account of their being offered, as prefiguring the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, or because the worshippers placed a *reliance*, a *trust* or *faith* on the future sufferings and death of the Messiah?



Let any one carefully read Heb. 9c., and we think it will be seen that the Apostle ingeniously accommodates the language and circumstances of the Jewish sacrifices to the death of Christ; but this was rather to soften the Jewish prejudices against a suffering Messiah; it was an accommodation, not on account of the actual intention of the Jewish sacrifices; for there is no proof in the Old Testament, that the Jews had any idea of their rites and ceremonies being types of future events. It is evident that the sacrifices of the Mosaic law were not regarded as substitutes for punishment, nor as having any reference to Christ's vicarious sacrifice, because they are represented as inferior in the divine estimation to humility, mercy, and obedience of heart. In Psalm 51, 17v. and Psalm 40 6v., we read, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offerings; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite spirit, O God, thou wilt not despise." Mark the language of Samuel, 1 Book, 15c. 22v. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in *obeying* the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." Observe the language of Isaiah, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts—bring no more vain oblations, *wash ye, make you clean*, put away the evil of our doings," &c. The prophet Hosea 6c. 6v. says, "For I desired *mercy*, and not *sacrifice*; and the *knowledge* of God, more than burnt offerings." In Amos 5c. 22, 24. we read, "Though ye offer me burnt offerings, I will not accept them: but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." In Micah 6c. 6v. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, &c." Now the general strain of these passages,

cannot but appear most extraordinary, if the Jewish Scriptures had any reference to the death of Christ, as a substituted punishment, and were intended to prefigure it. Is it reasonable to suppose, that the favourite people of God had a religion, or mode of worship prescribed for them, the beauty and efficacy of which, consisted in its reference to a future event, and yet not so much as a hint should be given them of such a reference? Before we leave this interesting enquiry in reference to sacrifices, it may be as well to observe, that substituted punishment cannot possibly be intended by the following sacrifices, “A broken and contrite spirit, O God, thou wilt not despise,” Psalm 51, 16 17v. The Apostle’s exhortation to Christians, “to present their bodies living sacrifices to God,” Rom. 12c. 1v. : and St. Paul’s language to the Hebrews, cannot refer to substituted punishment, in the sacrifices which were constituted of praise and doing good, Heb. 13c. ; neither can his language be so understood in Rom. 15c. 16v., “That I should be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, &c.”—that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, “Yea, or if I be offered upon the sacrifice, and service of your faith,” Phil. 4c. 18v. ; and again, “I have received of Epaphroditus, the things that were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” But it is surely needless to quote any further instances, wherein sacrifices had been offered to God, to shew that they had no reference to substituted punishment. Again, our Saviour is said, in Matt. 20c. 38v., and in Tim. 2c. 6v., “to have given his life a ransom for many and for all,” which language is supposed to teach, that the death of Christ, was a substitute for the miseries due to the wicked; but before this can be admitted, we must take the word *ransom*, in its primary and literal sense, and then there must be a party to whom the price *or ransom* was paid, as well as a *Redeemer* who pays it. Those who insist on the primary sense, when the word is used in reference to Christ, should be prepared to tell us to whom the ransom was paid! Surely no one will say it

was paid to God, because, then we must impute to God, the character of the slave-holder, by whom sinners had been kept in bondage. To whom, then did Christ pay the ransom for sinners? not surely to the Devil, who is said to have a very large portion of mankind in durance vile. The word *ransom*, cannot be literally interpreted, when applied to the death of Christ, which compels us to adopt the figurative sense of the term, which represents Christ as the means, the way by which men are to be delivered from the consequences of sin, and to obtain eternal life. In this sense, God gave Egypt a *ransom* for the Israelites, Isaiah, 43c. 3v. "The Israelites were delivered from bondage, by the sufferings of the Egyptians—but, observe the sufferings of the Egyptians, were not a substitute for the punishment due to the Israelites, although it effected their deliverance—neither can our Lord's sufferings, be regarded as a substitute for those due to sinners. When the wicked are said, by Solomon, to be a ransom for the righteous, it surely cannot mean that they were accepted of God, in the place of the righteous. Christ is said to have died for us, and to have suffered for us—but it cannot be right to say, that therefore, he died as a substitute for sinners—when God has expressly declared, that the fathers shall not be put to death for the children; neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers, every man shall be put to death for his own sin," Deut. 24c. 10v. And be pleased to bear in mind, the text for our last lecture, Ezekiel 18c. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die, the righteousness, &c." If you ask how do Unitarians understand the term *dying* for sinners, we answer, we believe that Christ died for the sake of sinners. In his benevolent labour, to rescue mankind from the thralldom of sin—to lead them to a right knowledge and worship of God—to recover them from a state of death—he suffered and died. In this manner, and in this alone, did our blessed master suffer death for us. We have heard, Isaiah 53c. 26v., adduced as evidence, of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, or that he bore the wrath of God, in the place of sinners. The



words generally quoted, are these, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Again, "He shall bear their iniquities." "And he bear the sins of many." Now in reference to the expressions *iniquities, born, and laid*, they are synonymous, because, if a man bears a burden, it must be first laid upon him, and if it be laid upon him, he certainly bears it. There are some other expressions in the Scriptures, which deserve consideration; for instance, in Exodus, 28c. 36v. Moses is commanded of God, to make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, "Holiness to the Lord," which Aaron is to place upon his forehead, "*that he may bear the iniquity of the holy things*, which the children of Israel shall hallow." Again, Lev. 10c., the priests are required to eat the meat of the sin offering, in the holy place, "*to bear the iniquity of the congregation.*" Now where in either of these instances, are we taught *vicarious* offering, or substituted suffering? Were they not symbolical acts, to remind the people that God in every act of worship, required holiness and purity? In Ezekiel 4c. the Lord tells Ezekiel, he shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, and *that also* of the house of Judah. Are we to understand by this, that God meant Ezekiel should suffer punishment *instead* of Israel and Judah? surely not. The prophet Jeremiah, says in Lam. 5c., "Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquities." Here the children are said to have suffered the evil consequences of their father's wickedness, not that they were punished in the stead of their fathers. St. Paul says in Rom. 15c. "We then who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." In Gal. 6c. 2v., he says, "Bear one another's burdens." That he always bore about, in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, 2d Cor. 4c. 10v. And Christ is said to *bare* our sins in his own *body* on the tree. If then we are to understand the latter passage to mean that Christ bore the punishment due to *us*, we must understand the former passage to mean, that the dying, or sufferings of Christ, were transferred to Paul, and that the Apostle bore the punishment due to all.



But we must not omit to mention a very strong argument, to shew that the popular interpretation of the expressions found in Isaiah, 53c., is erroneous. St. Matthew, after enumerating many important miracles which our Lord had performed upon those possessed of devils, (which were cases of insanity) and upon the sick, also says, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, "himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." If to bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows, does not mean that Christ actually took them upon himself, and suffered them in his own person, why should "*bearing our sins*" mean that he actually took them upon himself, and suffered the punishment due to them in his own person? If it be said that Christ bore the sicknesses of men, by exercising the delegated power of healing them, why may it not also be said, that he bore their *sins*; because, by the sufferings and labours he endured, he was the means of their removal? To us, it does appear worthy of the serious consideration of all Christians, that those expressions which are applied to the death of Christ in the New Testament, and which are considered the strongest proofs that Christ suffered as a substitute for sinners, should be found when used in the Old Testament, from whence they were adopted into the New Testament, to convey no such signification!! To us it appears from the language of Scripture, which has been supposed to countenance the doctrine of atonement, *i.e.* the *innocent*, suffering for the *guilty*, that such language has been misunderstood, having been taken literally, when it ought to have been interpreted figuratively. And nothing more than this can be necessary, to prove any doctrine groundless, and erroneous. We will now briefly examine some passages in the New Testament, where reference is made to the death of Christ. Rom. 3c. 25v. "Whom God hath set forth, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." This has been said to mean, that the justice of God, stood in the way of pardoning the sinner, and would have rendered

forgiveness impossible, had not Christ suffered for mankind, the desert of their sins. Here, propitiation is said by some of the ablest of commentators, to mean the *mercy seat*, referring to the mercy seat on the *Ark*, which was the medium of communication between God and the Israelites. So the Apostle calls Christ the propitiatory seat, because he was the medium of communication between God and mankind at large; because through Christ, God manifests his love to men—his mercy to sinners—his willingness to pardon them on repentance, and amendment of life. The expression, “through faith in his blood,” has been thought to countenance the doctrine of atonement; but the language refers evidently to the sprinkling of the blood of the *sin offering*, upon and before the mercy seat; and as the mercy seat of the *Ark* was consecrated by the blood of the victim, so Jesus Christ who is our mercy seat under the new covenant, was consecrated by the shedding of his blood, to procure for us reconciliation with God, and eternal life. Again, the expression, righteousness of God, we consider does not mean his justice, but obedience to his laws, which he requires to be kept; for instance, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” which evidently signifies, obedience to his commands. Trinitarians confidently appeal to Rom. 26c. 3v. as proof of their view of atonement, but with what success we leave you to judge, “To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth.” Your late *minister*, after *renouncing Unitarianism*, and embracing the *doctrines* of the *Church of England*, (from the number and *weight* of *arguments* adduced in proof thereof, by a *clergyman*, who has *himself* since seen the *necessity* of becoming a *Dissenter*,) asks, if the doctrine of atonement be not true, how can God be just, and the justifier of him that believeth? And we may as reasonably ask, when was there a period in which God was unjust? and where, in the Old or New Testament, can be pointed out the record of his injustice. We reply to the former question in the language of an able divine and scholar, “Divine mercy

having appointed Jesus to be the medium of the new dispensation, has thought fit to make it known to the world, in the present age, the age in which it is our happiness to live, and which infinite wisdom has selected as the fittest and the best for the introduction of this new and benevolent scheme. And as faith in Jesus is the easy, the reasonable, and the sole condition of admission to the privileges of the new covenant, these blessings are equally open to all, whether Jew or Gentile. And thus hath God approved himself the kind parent, and the equitable and impartial ruler of all his reasonable creatures. He is just to all, while he thus justifies all who believe, without any exception." If this answer be not acceptable to Trinitarians, let them supply us with one which shall make out the justice of God more satisfactorily and reasonably. But it must not be an attempt to justify God, by representing him, as first making all mankind sinners, and then *obliged* to place his own divine nature into the man Christ Jesus, in order to die, to save sinners from the consequences of their depraved natures. Would this be a better interpretation of the words of the Apostle? We think not. We have now examined, and it is readily admitted but very briefly, those texts of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, which are supposed to favour the doctrine of atonement, and from these we must have seen, unless we are determined not to see, the fact, that the noun *atonement*, when used in the Scriptures, means a *reconciliation*; and the verb, *to atone*, *to reconcile*. From which it does appear that the modern acceptance of the word atonement, which implies a substitution of one thing for another, is not applicable to the term as used in the Bible. We must now briefly enquire into the doctrine of infinite satisfaction, as being nearly allied to that of the atonement, and it is evident, that if the popular doctrine of substituted punishment be invalidated, that of infinite satisfaction must fall with it. As it regards the doctrine of infinite satisfaction, its simple statement will, we think, convince any reasonable mind of its erroneousness. It teaches that



the second person of the Trinity, equal to God in all the divine attributes, assumed human nature, and then suffered the infinite wrath of God in our stead : that every sin which man commits, is of infinite extent in the sight of God, and consequently requires an *infinite atonement* and satisfaction. Hence it teaches, that the nature of the person who suffered was *infinite*. Now our Trinitarian brethren, cannot surely assert it as their conscientious conviction, that he, who alone hath *immortality*, and dwelleth in light, which no man can approach unto, that this eternal God expired on the cross? And surely they will not contend, that that nature, which suffered death, was infinite? Can infinity be destroyed? If then, it was not infinity that died, what becomes of the *infinite atonement* and satisfaction? We have now considered the *atonement* of Christ as popularly held ; and in the name of that Saviour, whose instructions we revere, and in the name of his God and Father, whose boundless grace we adore, we beg to be shewn the Scriptural authority for the truth of the following doctrine, “ That Jesus effected the reconciliation of sinners, by the full satisfaction which he made to the offended justice of God, in his own sufferings and death, and we will bow to its authority. But on a doctrine so opposed to reason and piety—on a subject which so deeply involves the character of God, and the spirit of genuine religion, we cannot consent to take the mere inferences and interpretations of men”—not even if we could not discover their fallacy, which however we think we can do most clearly. “ Taking all that is written in Scripture concerning the death and sacrifice of Christ in its literal sense—making no allowance for Jewish phraseology, and for the highly figurative style of the Eastern language in which the Bible is written, which ought always to be considered in our interpretation of that sacred book, has been the chief cause of the strange inferences of men respecting the death of Christ.” Lastly, as we have endeavoured to shew that the popular views of the atonement by Christ are not warranted by the language of the Old and New Testament, allow us to shew wherein con-



sists that salvation, which Christ brought into the world. He came to deliver mankind from gross ignorance, error, and sin. Hence he was called Jesus—"thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save," &c. "The son of man is come to save that which was lost:" lost in wickedness, lost in ignorance and idolatry. It was for this reason he commissioned the Apostle Paul to "visit the *Gentiles*, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and," &c. Hence he came to redeem us from all iniquity, &c. Who then did he come to save? He came to be the author of eternal salvation unto all that *obey him*. From this language it is evident that we must become practical Christians before we can be saved. Look upon the perfect law of Christ—his holy precepts, which embrace every duty of piety, benevolence, and self-government; are they not calculated to regulate the whole conduct of life—to purify our souls, to sanctify our inmost thoughts and affections, and to lead us to dedicate our souls and bodies to the moral service of God. Look, my friends, I beseech of you, at the solemn, but no less pleasing sanctions of the divine law. Its denunciation of woe and anguish to every unrepenting sinner. Its promises of glory, honor, and immortality to all that obey. And then turn and gaze upon that spotless being, who was sanctified and sent into the world, to be a pattern of every kind of moral excellence. Look at the cheering truths which he revealed concerning the mercy, goodness, and loving kindness of God. That his Father willed not that any should perish in their sins, but rather that all men should be brought to a knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved and sanctified thereby. In short, look upon the whole system of doctrines, of holy commandments, consolatory promises, and all the heavenly and blissful prospects, which the Christian religion opens to the contemplation of its sincere believers. These being treasured in the mind, with strong faith and love—with a reasonable conviction of the truth—with a solemn sense of their authority—with an earnest desire to cultivate the character they encourage, and to realize the animating hopes they inspire—these, these my friends, we, as Unitarians,

solemnly believe are the principal, the all-sufficient means of Christian salvation. By the operation of these principles in our minds and hearts—by the discipline of life, and the grace of God, believers in all ages of the Christian Church, shall be sanctified and prepared for the blessedness of Heaven.

## LECTURE V.

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### P R E D E S T I N A T I O N .

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*Ezek. xviii. 27.*

WHEN THE WICKED MAN TURNETH AWAY FROM HIS WICKEDNESS THAT HE HATH COMMITTED, AND DOETH THAT WHICH IS LAWFUL AND RIGHT, HE SHALL SAVE HIS SOUL ALIVE.

The duty of an unprejudiced enquiry into all the received doctrines of religion, must surely appear most important, when it is considered, that they are supposed to advance the cause of virtue, and the highest happiness of man. The motive which actuates Unitarians to enquire into the nature, evidence, and tendency of the doctrine of predestination, as held by some Christians, (whose desire to promote the cause of divine truth, and the present and future happiness of mankind, Unitarians do not for a moment question) is, that it does not appear to them founded on the positive declarations of God's holy word, but inconsistent with the acknowledged character and perfections of God, and anything but calculated to promote the important ends of true religion. The doctrine of *predestination*, founded probably on the doctrine of *prescience*, was introduced into the Christian world about the time of Augustine, and if not propagated by him, in the first instance, it was under his authority, that the doctrines of prescience and pre-

destination received the stamp and credit of orthodoxy—were adopted as articles of Christian faith—were incorporated in the Christian creed, and were interwoven with Christian systems. Since the days of Augustine, subsequently to the darkness of the middle ages of the Christian church, and especially since the art of printing has been invented, and more particularly since the *right* and the *competency* of private judgement, in the interpretation of the Scriptures has been understood and acknowledged, many professors of religion have disclaimed their belief in the doctrine of predestination, as being incompatible with *human responsibility*, as well as with the moral government of God; and we might imagine, that the bare statement of the doctrine of predestination would be quite sufficient to prevent its adoption by Christians in to their religious belief. Because, it declares that God has immutably fixed the eternal destiny of men, before they are brought into their present state of probation, having assigned the greatest felicity to one portion, and eternal misery to another portion of his children. But to avoid a mis-statement of the doctrine in question, we will give the Calvinistic view of it. “God Almighty, before the foundation of the world, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, a certain portion of mankind out of his mere *free grace* and *love*, without any foresight of their faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereto.” As to the rest of mankind, which includes the greater portion of the human race, it is asserted, “That God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, to pass them by, and to ordain them to dishonor, and *everlasting wrath* for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice,” *vide* Westminster Catechism. This catechism, be it known, was drawn up by some divines at Westminster, and consequently of human origin. As it is composed of inferences drawn from the Scriptures, and declared to be founded upon them, our duty is to endeavour to see how far the Scriptures countenance the

doctrine of predestination which this catechism teaches. We are aware, that this doctrine is said to derive its chief support from some verses in 9c. of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. But how can the Apostle's language, which refers to the calling, not of *individuals*, but of *nations*, to the privileges of the Gospel dispensation, be said to apply to the doctrine of predestination? The Apostle is evidently exposing the prejudices, and bigotry of the Jews, who were angry with the Apostles for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the Gentiles. The Jews always considered themselves exclusively the favourites of heaven, having been honoured with the title of the *chosen of the Lord*, and enjoying many important privileges—to whom, saith the Apostle, “pertaineth the *adoption*, and the *glory*, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.” It cannot be a matter of surprise that the Jews, proud of their privileges, were desirous of monopolizing the divine favour, and that they should feel indignant with the Apostle Paul for making the Gentiles equally with themselves, participators in the Gospel privileges. Paul's address to the Gentiles, at Antioch, filled the Jews with envy, and led them to contradict and blaspheme, which increased the Apostle's boldness, and he said, “it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you *put it from* you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life,” *lo!* we turn to the Gentiles. And in Acts 13c., the Jews we find continued to persecute Paul and Barnabas, until they were expelled from their coasts. And St. Paul's defence before the Jews, at Jerusalem, was listened to with profound attention, until he named his commission to preach to the Gentiles, and then they lifted up their voices, and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live,” Acts 22c. Good Apostle, bold advocate of truth, would that thou hadst buried in the grave of oblivion, the horrible and cruel monster, *bigotry*—but alas, now, that spirit, which deprived thee of life, for maintaining the truths



of the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, is still abroad in the world, harrassing the living, tormenting the dying, and would, if it were possible, make the dead tremble. St. Paul in addressing his Gentile converts at *Rome*, takes an opportunity of softening the Jewish prejudices against the calling of the Gentiles. The Apostle's argument is this, that the ceremonial law of Moses, will avail nothing to justification, under the Christian dispensation, but a lively and sincere faith in Jesus Christ. The rejection of the new covenant *by the Jews*, had deprived them of Gospel privileges and blessings, and had forfeited their claim to divine favour, whilst the Gentiles, by their *reception* of the Gospel, had become the children of God, and heirs of the promise of eternal life. Hence the Apostle says to the *Jews*, ye are broken off through or because of unbelief, and to the Gentiles, "*thou standest by faith.*" This appears to be a summary of St. Paul's answer to the Jews, and bearing this in mind, it will be found further illustrated by those passages in the 9th of Romans, which are said to teach most decidedly the doctrine of unconditional election. The Apostle argues, and justly, God's right to make whom he choses the heirs of promise, and illustrates the truth of that statement, by reminding the Jews, that though the promise was to Abraham's seed, it did not include all the descendants of that pious patriarch, because Isaac, the younger son of Abraham, was chosen before Ishmael, the elder. And so of Isaac's children, Jacob was preferred before Esau, as the individual from whom the children of promise should descend. But this preference was given by the Almighty, without regard to works, as the election had taken place before either Isaac or Jacob could have known good from evil. We are anxious to be perfectly understood in this place, as the correct rendering of these words of the Prophet Malachi, 1c. 2, 3v., quoted by St. Paul, "*Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated,*" is absolutely necessary to avoid the strange inference which some have drawn from these words, *viz.*, that God was a partial being, who is said to be no respecter of persons.

But any one may learn, if he will take pains to read the Bible for himself, that the language of the prophet does not, as many imagine, refer to the *persons of Jacob and Esau*, but to their descendants, the *Israelites* and *Edomites*, for nations are frequently spoken of in the Bible, by the name of the person from whom they are descended. The Lord told Rebecca, that she should bring forth two nations, two manner of people, and the one should be stronger than the other, Gen. 25c. 23v. ; and how remarkably this prophecy was fulfilled, may be seen in 2 Sam. 8c. 14. when David subdued the Edomites, and placed garrisons throughout the country. Now the love of Jacob, or loving the Israelites, was granting them permission to enjoy the land of Canaan, and had no reference to *eternal life*, of which the Israelites had no promise, for all their promises were of a temporal nature. Neither can their election to the promised land, be viewed as an absolute election, because it is said, “ that many were expelled the wilderness, or overthrown in it for disobedience and unbelief,” see 1 Cor. 10c. 5v. and Heb. 3c. 19v. Now had they been absolutely elected, they could never have been overthrown in the wilderness. Neither had God’s hatred of Esau, or the Edomites, any reference to eternal condemnation, but to their exclusion from the land of Canaan. The expression, “ Esau have I hated,” means less favoured than Jacob, not absolutely hated ; the expression hate, is to be understood in a similar manner, as used by our Lord, Luke 14c. 26v., “ If any man come to me, and *hate* not his *father* and *mother*.” Now would it not be absurd, to make the holy Saviour teach, that we cannot become Christians, unless we hate our parents? What our Lord teaches is this, that dear as our earthly parents may and ought to be to us, we are called upon as Christians, to love virtue and holiness more than earthly relatives, because of their ultimate consequences “ *eternal happiness*.” That man, who can deduce the doctrine of the predestination of particular persons to eternal life or eternal damnation, from the Apostles reference to Jacob and Esau, must have more

than his share of ingenuity. What the Apostle says in the 9th to the 11th verse is strikingly true, "What then are we better than they?" *i.e.* *Gentiles*. No, in nowise saith he, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, by which language the Apostle means to say, "For though your advantages as Jews have been many and great, I have already plainly shown, that you have altogether forfeited your privileges by your crimes, and I am now about to prove, by an induction of particulars, that your own Scriptures confirm the just but melancholy representation." Then the Apostle, to corroborate the truth of his statement, refers to the Jewish Scriptures, and labours to convince both the Jews and Gentiles, that neither had any *claim* upon God for the Gospel, each having broken the divine commandments, but as God was graciously pleased to offer the Gospel to both Gentile and Jew, it was an act of grace, and hence the Apostle calls it the "*Election of Grace*," Rom. 11c. 5v. The election was not of works, *i. e.* arose not from men's merits, but of him that calleth, from the *grace* and *mercy* of God. Hence the Apostle denies, that God can be accused of injustice. "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid," for he has an undoubted right to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, *i. e.* his divine prerogative, to offer the Gospel to whomsoever he pleases, to either Gentiles or Jews, cannot be questioned. "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," Rom. 9c. 16v., refers not to the election of certain persons to salvation, but to the calling of mankind to Christianity, and offering to them the privileges of the Gospel. Again, we find the Apostle, in order to illustrate the argument he had used, in reference to the Jews and Gentiles, instances the forbearance of the Almighty towards *Pharoah*, recorded in Exodus 9c., and represents the Deity as bearing long with the wickedness of *Pharoah*, in order to exhibit, through him, his power to the world; so he exercised his long suffering towards the Israelites who had forfeited all claim to his favour, that at length, by manifesting his



displeasure against them, in his rejection of them for their impenitence, he might induce the Gentiles to accept the blessings of the Gospel covenant. The Jews are termed vessels of *wrath*, fitted to destruction, on account of their impenitency and disobedience to God's will; while the Gentiles are called vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory, by which the Apostle means, that the Almighty foresaw the readiness of the Gentiles to embrace the Gospel, Ephesians 1c. 4, 5, 9, 10v. Again, Romans 9 and 21c. is supposed to countenance this doctrine of predestination. "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel to honour, and another unto dishonour." But these words illustrate, in a very satisfactory manner, the right of Omnipotence to deprive the Jews of the peculiar privileges they had forfeited by their misconduct, and to bestow them on the Gentiles, who were willing to receive and appreciate them. Here, then, it is evident the Apostle was speaking, in the former part of the chapter, of the Jews and Gentiles, who had been called to partake of the Gospel privileges, and not of individuals to eternal life; and in this opinion, we are confirmed by what he says in Rom. 9c. 24, 25, 26v., "Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," as he saith also, in Hosea, "I will call them my people, which were not my people, and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God." Then the Apostle quotes the prophecy of Isaiah, which relates to the partial reception of the Gospel by the Jews in these words, "A remnant of Israel shall be saved," *i. e.* shall accept the Gospel. Hence then we see, that in Rom. 9c., the Apostle is speaking of nations, and not of individuals, and of the *election* to Gospel privileges, and not election to eternal life. It must be evident, to the careful reader of the Apostle's words that he is speaking of a national, and not of absolute election. The denial of



Christ as Messiah, on the part of the Jews, was the cause of their being *rejected*, so on the other hand, the acknowledging of Christ as Messiah, by the Gentiles, was the reason for their being *received* "as the children of the living God." The Apostle proves that it was unbelief, which separated, or broke off the Jews from God, and faith that preserved the Gentiles. Examine the words of the Apostle in Rom. 11c. 20, 21, 23v., "Because of unbelief, they, the Jews, were broken off, and thou, *i. e.* the Gentiles standeth by faith. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, *i. e. who fell* (from obedience) *severity*; but towards thee, (the Gentiles) goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off, and they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again;" and the Apostle says, in 1 Cor. 1c. 21v. "It pleased God to save them that *believe*," *i. e.* the election of grace. Now to all this language, the doctrine of *absolute predestination*, is decidedly opposed. Had the Apostle believed, that the elect were sure of salvation, why did he remind the elected Gentile, that he stood by faith, and that unless he continued in it, he should be cut off? And if the Apostle really believed that the reprobated, or rejected, could not by any possible means obtain eternal life, how could he have said of the Jews, that if they did not continue in unbelief, they should be grafted in, by which we must understand the Apostle to mean, should be restored to their forfeited privilege. But if the doctrine of election be true, *i. e.* the doctrine, that a *few* shall be saved, and all the rest *eternally* condemned, what can the Apostle mean by this declaration, that eventually *all Israel* shall be saved? Mark the Apostle's words, "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall." God forbid! but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles for to provoke their jealousy, *i. e.* to excite the Jews to emulate the Gentiles who had embraced the Gospel. But where would have been the necessity on the part of the Apostle to urge

upon the Jews, the importance of receiving the Gospel, if he had believed in their election to eternal condemnation? It also appears, from the language of the same Apostle, "that blindness in *part* is happened to Israel, *until* the fullness of the Gentiles be come in;" does not this language plainly teach, that the rejection of Christianity, on the part of the Jews, is to be temporal? Yes, the time will come, however far distant it may be at present, when our Jewish brethren shall be brought within the pale of the Christian church, by embracing the pure and sublime truths of the Gospel; but it is to be feared, that this wished for period is seriously procrastinated by offering to them sectarianism for pure Christianity, and mystery instead of the revelation of God. Again, how is it possible to reconcile the notion, that the greater part of the human race is doomed to eternal woe, when the Apostle declares, that *all* Israel shall be *saved*, *i. e.* converted to Christianity, quoting Isaiah 59c. 20, 21v., "There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." And then the Apostle, after contemplating the magnificent scheme of redemption, and contrasting the mercy of God with the disobedience of man, bursts forth into this majestic apostrophe, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways." From the whole of the Apostle's language, both in the 9th and 11th of Romans, it does appear unreasonable to infer, the election of individuals to either eternal life or to eternal misery. To all who will carefully examine the Apostle's words, it will appear that the Jews were not privileged to be called the children of God, because of their rejection of the Messiah, and that this was owing to their deeply-rooted prejudices, and not to any absolute decree of God respecting them. There is another passage quoted from Ephesians, 1c. 5v., which is supposed to favour the doctrine of predestination; "Having predestinated us, unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, accord-

ing to the good pleasure of his will ;” which verse, according to rational interpretation, refers to the appointment of the Gentiles to enjoy that distinction conferred upon them by the Gospel : the distinction was, that the Gentiles should be the *children of God* by adoption. And observe the language refers to the temporal, and not to the *eternal* condition of men. And what is still more remarkable, the Apostle refers to the necessity of the conduct of the predestinated being in conformity with the principles of the Gospel, “ We know all things work together for good, to those that love God to them that are called according to his purpose, for whom he did foreknow, he also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” Again, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Now, why should conformity to the moral image of our Saviour be enjoined upon us, if we are already elected or predestinated of God, to be the first-born among many brethren ; and if elected from all eternity to be saved, why should holiness and unblamableness be urged upon us by the Apostle. We must confess, that if we could bring our minds to believe that we were elected to eternal happiness, appointed from eternity to be the favourites of heaven, and that many, whom we now love and esteem on earth, were appointed unto eternal misery when they died, such a conviction would certainly mar every moment of our present existence. What happiness could we enjoy in the presence of that God, whose decree we knew (for heaven, we believe, will be a state of consciousness) had also ordained millions, probably of beings equal, and probably superior to us in many respects, in mental and moral attainments, to irremediable misery ? Such a notion, if it accompanied my soul to heaven, would incapacitate me for enjoying its blessedness. But thank God, such a view of his character and dealings towards mankind, is both unscriptural and unjust. But the Scriptures, it is said, speak of the *election*. It is true they do,



but why is such an expression said to denote absolute election to eternal life or woe, when such a term is used to imply an admission to the outward privileges of the Gospel—to the profession of the Christian religion.” The literal translation of the word election is a *calling out*; hence the elect are said to be called out of a state of darkness and sin, to the marvellous light of the Gospel. In what other sense can we understand the words of the Apostle Peter, “Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.” If this language implies absolute election to eternal life, what sense can there be in making that sure by our own efforts which had been secured to us ages before, by a decree of omnipotence? The Apostle evidently means, that having been called out of darkness, out of sin, Christians were not to forget the important condition, or state in which they had been placed by the new dispensation, but to cultivate every Christian grace—to recommend the Gospel by their own lives—to adorn their religious profession, that they might finally obtain an entrance into life eternal. Again, in reference to the church at Ephesus, it is said in Acts 2c. 47v., “And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved.” This expression has been supposed to teach unconditional election, but the expression *should be saved*, would be more in accordance with the original, if rendered “those who were saved,” because it refers to such as had accepted the Gospel terms, and who were placed in the way of salvation. Neither can we believe that the Apostle meant to say, that every member of the church at Ephesus, was sure of obtaining eternal life. We read, in Acts 13c. 48v., “As many as were *ordained* to eternal life, believed.” These words convey to my mind, the fitness of those Gentiles to receive the word of the Lord; they appear to have received it willingly—they were unprejudiced against its reception. There is one more passage to which your attention is solicited, it is found in John 17c. 9v., our Lord says, “I pray for them, *i.e.* the Apostles, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine;” from these words,



many Christians imagine, that our Lord prayed for *a select few*, who were predestinated to eternal life. From this notion we cannot but dissent, because it appears that the 20th and 21st verses explain the object of our Lord's prayer, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word," *i.e.* the preaching of his disciples, "that they all may be one, as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." And in the same sense in which Christ prayed that he and his disciples might be one, he meant, when he said, "I and my father are one," not of one *essence*, one nature, but of one design, *i. e.* Christ was to cooperate with the father to save sinners, and in a similar sense but not to the same extent, all pious Christians are fellow workers with Christ, in saving sinners. If some Christians persist in maintaining that the words, "I and my Father are one," imply identity of essence, we have the same authority for insisting, that every Christian disciple is of the same nature and essence with the supreme being, because, Christ prays that the disciples, "*may be one as we are,*" John 17c. 11v. Having examined those passages of Scripture which are supposed to countenance the doctrine, that God has predestinated some to eternal life, and others to eternal condemnation, after mature consideration, our solemn conviction is, that such passages of Scripture, when calmly considered, do not teach any thing so awful, and so opposed to the generality of scriptural language concerning our merciful and compassionate creator and moral governor. But why shall a few passages of Scripture, (admitting, for the sake of argument, that they teach the doctrine of predestination, which we do not believe) be set in open array against a host of texts, teaching a doctrine honourable to that Being from whom religion emanated, to Jesus, by whom it was taught, and worthy of man to whom it was sent—why make that doctrine which represents God as a father to a few, and a tyrant to the many—as merciful,

and then unjust—as forgiving, and then implacable—as all love, and then all hatred, which is supported but by few passages more important to man, than the delightful view of his father’s mercy, his readiness to forgive sinners, and his solicitude for the happiness of the human race—a view of his eternal character, and moral administration, which is supported by the general tenor of the Scriptures? Let Unitarianism and Trinitarianism be tested by the Scriptures and common sense, and we have no fear for the result. Besides the difference of character between Unitarianism and Calvinistic Trinitarianism, is worthy of your observation, and may be thus tested; Christianity was sent as a system of grace and mercy superior to Judaism. “Mark, the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” With this Unitarianism corresponds, teaching that one was the perfection of the other. But if Trinitarianism comprehends predestination, election, and reprobation, then we maintain, that it represents Christianity inferior to Judaism; for Calvinistic Trinitarians teach that God’s tender mercies are *not* over *all* his works, but only over the *elect* or favoured *few*, whereas Judaism declares that his tender mercies are over all his works. If it be true, which some teach for Christianity, *viz.* that guilt is imputed even so as to subject justly, the posterity of Adam to eternal condemnation for his offence, Judaism, we know, teaches that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; and if Calvinism declares that every sin we commit as finite beings, is viewed by God as an *infinite* sin, and that he will have a full satisfaction for every sin, Judaism declares, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” If Calvinism says, “God’s wrath is eternal,” Judaism says, that judgment is his *strange work*. But we will now enquire of the Scriptures, what they teach concerning the intention of the most high respecting the human race. We know that the grand doctrine of the all-comprehending providence of God is thought by some “to be inconsistent with the Scripture doctrine of reward and punishment.” And truly this objection

would be a valid one, if the doctrines of modern orthodoxy were true. If men are *naturally depraved*, tainted with sin to the *heart's core*, and wholly *incapable* of helping themselves either by prayer or fasting—If human beings are placed in the condition of the predestinated to eternal wretchedness ere they live, and move, and exist in this life, and this without consent of theirs, then the doctrines of rewards and punishments appear incompatible with every principle of justice and mercy. If it be thus that God deals with his helpless and miserable creatures, then his mercy does appear to have clean gone. But such views of God and his moral government are not taught in Scripture; they would, to use the language of the late pious and learned Mr. Belsham, “impeach the Regent of the Universe as an Omnipotent tyrant.” The Old Testament abounds with passages illustrative of divine goodness, but how can goodness and mercy form a prominent feature in the divine attributes, if election and reprobation be true? Psalm 31 19v., “O how great is thy goodness for them who fear thee, that trust in thee;” Psalm 33 5v., “The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” Read Psalm 107 “The goodness of God is continual,” “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, &c.” 145th Psalm “The Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.” God is said to be gracious and merciful, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. God proclaims his own character through Moses, thus “The Lord God is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” John says, “*God is love*, God so loved us that he gave his only-begotten son; God sent not his son to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” But if the destiny of some is sealed, Christ cannot have died for *them*. God is said to be propitious. Psalm 25 “O Lord pardon my iniquity for it is great.” The prophet Daniel says “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness.” Why does the Deity address sinners in the language of mercy and forgiveness, if their future condition be determined before they sin? “As I live, saith the Lord God,



I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner ; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, why will ye die, O house of Israel." This language is as useless to the elect, whose salvation is secure, as to the reprobate whose doom is sealed. For whose benefit did the Saviour suffer and die ? Did he come to heal the elect ? No ! The elect were already saved. He came as a physician to the sick, *i. e.* to the sinful. But how can he heal the reprobated, whose state of wretchedness has been ordained by the same power which sent Christ into the world. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Now if the salvation of all whom God intended to save was already secured by his own unalterable decree, and the condemnation of the rest irrevocably fixed—why should the Saviour have been sent at all ? Are we to be told, fellow-Christians, that the Saviour was necessary—that his cruel death was necessary to render God merciful to wretched reprobate *man*, whom this very God had *reprobated*. The feeling of humanity, and the tender and finer principle of parental affection, are destroyed by such a doctrine. What would you think of me as a father, frail and erring as I feel I am, were I to heap upon one of my children all my tenderest caresses, and treat the rest of my offspring with cold indifference, turning them adrift upon the wide world, houseless and homeless, hungry and naked ? Why the law of my country would mercifully interpose its authority, by taking from my power the wretched children, and place them under a more merciful treatment, and I myself should be deservedly shunned as a human monster, and despised as an unfeeling wretch. But what would you say and think of me, if while I had heaped all favours and happiness on one of my children, I had chained the rest in a loathsome dungeon, there to be tormented with all kinds of punishment, and to waste away life in darkness, misery, and despair ? I know what you would both think and say of me, that the children should be released from their frightful situation, and that the merciless father should endure the same torture. Now I beseech of you look at the doctrine of election and reprobation. It teaches that



God has chosen some of his children to enjoy eternal blessings, and the rest to endure the most horrible indescribable punishment in eternal burnings. For our own part we cannot think that this doctrine of predestination is sincerely believed. It would rejoice our hearts to be convinced that it forms no portion of the belief of Christian professors of the present day, but only to be found in worn out creeds and milked catechisms. Again, the epistles of St. Paul, who is considered the great advocate of the doctrine in question, abound with admonitions and exhortations—but in what sense can such admonitions and exhortations benefit the elect or the reprobate? What says the Apostle, supposing election and reprobation to be true, “ Know ye not that they who run in a race, run all,” comparing the Christian’s life or course to a race; “ so run that ye may obtain;” “ And every one who striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things—now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown,” but saith the Apostle “ we an incorruptible.” Here the Apostle’s language teaches, that an *effort* is to be made by Christians to gain the favour of God—that the crown of glory is not to be obtained without great *labour*, “ self-government, and watchings often, and prayers often.” “ I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a *cast away*.” Now if the Apostle was elected to salvation, what need was there for him to fear his being cast away? “ I exhort first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for *all* men. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” “ Christ gave himself a ransom for all:” surely this language cannot have any meaning if election and reprobation be true. My friends whilst we fear to exhaust your patience by any further citations from Scripture, we do not fear to be charged with a fault too common amongst Christian professors, that of quoting passages of Scripture to bolster up a favourite hypothesis, which really have no reference to the subject under consideration. We have conscien-

tiously avoided doing this, because we hold it to be a serious evil to misapply the Scriptures; they are too sacred to be trifled with. We have now carefully considered those passages which are said to teach Election and Reprobation, but from these we do not perceive such doctrines therein taught. But even had we suspicions that the Scriptures taught such doctrines, by implication, their moral consequences would be quite sufficient to deter us from embracing them. The doctrine of Election has been known to engender in some, presumption, arrogance, and enthusiasm, whilst Reprobation has horrified the man of melancholy temperament—whilst the former doctrine is calculated to make us at ease in Zion, the other will wither and destroy every hope of the soul, and lead us to contemplate the dark doom of eternal torments, in black despair. Whilst the elect may sin and be saved, the reprobate can not even mitigate his eternal torments by prayer and supplication. Hear what the British Divines at the synod of Dort, say of the elect, “ Their most grievous sins are so far from disturbing the justification of the faithful, that God doth often permit such sins in them, that their justification and adoption may be the more confirmed.” What says another Calvinistic authority about the reprobated. “ The reason for God’s addressing himself to reprobates by the outward ministry, are to convince them of their negligence—to render them inexcusable—to increase their induration or hardness of heart, and to augment their eternal misery.” It is consolatory to know that the present advocates of election and reprobation, do not carry this doctrine to the extremity which the early Calvinists did; and sincerely do we hope that ancient Calvinism has lost its asperities. It probably had its use in by-gone times, like those strange figures which protrude their unsightly forms from beneath the eaves of ancient monasteries and churches, and which are said to have been placed there to terrify the ignorant into piety. There is nothing more astonishing in the compass of theological history, than the tenacity with which the notions of innate depravity, and election, and reprobation, have been maintained; because they

darken and perplex beyond all other things, the moral administration of God—confound every notion both of equity and of benevolence—nay if these doctrines were consistently followed out, there would be an end to personal religion. For how could we be convinced of sins which we had never committed? or which we believe to have been committed through an overpowering necessity. And who shall determine the condition of any man? who shall say that one man is elected, and another reprobated? Did not the son of God come into the world to announce glad tidings of great joy?—to acquaint the erring that repentance of sins was better than sacrifice, and that holiness was more acceptable to God than burnt offerings? Did not the hearts of men rejoice when the Saviour was raised from the dead and exalted to heaven, to ratify the most glorious truth ever disclosed to the world, *viz.* “that this corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.” This was the glad tidings of great joy. But does the disclosure that men are born in sin, so as to be wholly depraved, condemned for Adam’s guilt, incapable of repentance without supernatural interference, and the greater part of mankind abandoned without remedy to endless misery; do these views of God’s dealings and intentions respecting mankind appear as delightful announcements? It is as impossible that such notions can constitute the Gospel of great joy, as that God should sport with the miseries of man. These are the errors which have been mixed up with the pure word of life, and which, as Unitarians, we are desirous of seeing, as they ought to be, scattered to the moles and bats. To effect this, let us with unwearied patience encounter error and prejudice, so that the truth, as it is in Jesus, may prevail.—“Let us be zealous, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; knowing, that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.”

## LECTURE VI.

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### SATANIC INFLUENCE.

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*Jude i. 6.*

AND THE ANGELS WHICH KEPT NOT THEIR FIRST ESTATE, BUT LEFT THEIR OWN HABITATION, HE HATH RESERVED IN EVERLASTING CHAINS UNDER DARKNESS UNTO THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY.

OUR present enquiry into the reasonable and scriptural evidence for the existence of the Devil, cannot surely be deemed unimportant, particularly when it is considered that this Devil, or invisible being, has a ready access to the human heart; that he is capable of secretly influencing man's temper and conduct—that he is a malevolent supernatural being, armed with strength scarcely less than *Omnipotence*; possessing an ubiquity little inferior to *Omnipresency*, and endued with a degree of knowledge amounting to *Omniscience*. In making this enquiry, and presenting you with our own views of this subject, it is very probable, that many things may be stated contrary to your pre-conceived notions. Should this be the case, all we ask of you is, to enjoy your own views of this and of every religious subject by all means, but allow us also the privilege of holding fast that form of godliness which we, from reading and searching the Scriptures for ourselves, conscientiously believe to be true. However we may differ from other Christians in religious matters, we are taught ever to cherish in our bosoms love and charity towards all mankind; and believing as we do, that every man shall be hereafter rewarded according to that



he hath done in the body, whether it be good or evil, and and not according to opinions, be they orthodox or heterodox, we presume not to judge our fellow men, as all judgment is committed to the *Son*, who is appointed of God to be the only judge of the quick and the dead. It is impossible for Christian professors to adopt a more successful method to injure the sacred cause of religion, than for them to condemn and denounce each other for differences of opinion. If it be as it unquestionably is, the duty of Christians of every denomination, to search the Scriptures diligently, and to bring every religious doctrine to the touch stone of sacred authority, the Unitarians ought not, any more than other religionists, to suffer reproach and aspersions for not inferring the popular theories of religion from the sacred word of God. The man who appeals to the Scriptures to satisfy his mind, respecting the truth of any religious doctrine, is to be commended and not blamed; and if his inferences, and deductions from them, are afterwards found to be decided errors such a man ought to share our pity—but never our censure. Surely the man who *honestly* seeks after divine truth, but who unhappily misses of his object, has a far greater claim to our esteem and respect, than he who never troubles himself about the solemn truths of religion—who passes on year after year, utterly regardless of his immortal interests; and yet have we witnessed with grief and surprise, the thoughtless, the ignorant, and the depraved, treated with more courtsey and respect in society, than the man who from conscientious scruples, has searched the Scriptures to frame for himself a religious creed, by which to regulate his conduct through life. Be the consequences to us in a temporal sense, good or evil, for searching with anxious diligence the word of God, and drawing therefrom our own conclusions, (a privilege this, which, no human beings have a right to question) let us do all things from a love of God, and with a sincere desire to promote his glory and honour among men, and the cause of truth and righteousness, and we need not fear what man can do. To

the Scriptures, then we shall now appeal to aid us in the following enquiry. Does there exist an order of beings, called *angels*, who fell from heavenly peace and perfection, and became transformed into devils? This step cannot be deemed unnecessary, and unimportant, if, as some have imagined, that the popular notion of satanic agency had its origin in fallen angels. On this subject we shall state our own views, and not presume to give what some persons might suppose to be the prevailing views of Unitarians on this doctrine. This statement will apply<sup>s</sup> as well, to the views which may be advanced in the following Lectures, upon Sheol, Hades, Tartarus, and Gehenna. Altho' we do not believe in fallen angels, as popularly understood, yet the doctrine of *angels*, of beings superior to the human race, whose office it may be to wait the commands of Omnipotence, and execute errands of mercy to the human race, we are willing to believe. Therefore be pleased to suspend your judgement, of what might appear to you unreasonable, in admitting the doctrine of glorified, whilst we dispute that of fallen angels, until we have more fully enquired into the latter hypothesis. It is necessary, that we should first ask ourselves this simple question. "What is the meaning of the word angel"? Is it a proper name? or descriptive of a certain kind of being; it is replied no: but when the word is applied to an intelligent agent, it describes him as acting in some capacity, some office, but it does not define any peculiar order of beings. The word angel *means an agent for another, a messenger*, and by observing how this word is applied in the Scriptures, we shall find this meaning of the word substantiated. It will not be denied, that men in several places of the Scriptures are called angels; for instance, in Rev. 1c. 20v., 11c. 1, 2, 3v., the ministers of the churches are called angels, and we find that the original word for angels frequently translated also messengers, Matt. 11c. 10v. Mark 1c. 2v. Luke 7c. 27., 9c. 52v.<sup>r</sup> James 2c. 25v. applied to men. It appears, that the word angel, when it occurs in Scripture should be read *messenger*, and

ought always to be considered with reference to its context. The active powers of nature are sometimes spoken of as the angels of God, for instance wind and fire; and when fallen angels are spoken of in Scripture, it is necessary to enquire, whether such fallen angels may not mean men who have proved unfaithful in their office as messengers; but this view of angels is now stated merely as a passing observation. If the doctrine of fallen angels be true, as most popular Trinitarian writers imagine, “that they swerved from their allegiance to the blessed and only potentate, on which account they lost their first estate, and that one of these pre-eminent in rank and dignity took the lead in the revolt—that under the name of Satan he continues to rule the rest who are styled his angels—if this Satan has established an infernal empire, and ever been engaged in a malignant and implacable opposition to the will of God—it does appear strange if this doctrine be true, that the Scriptures themselves should be so silent as they are respecting these fallen beings. Surely it cannot be presumptuous and unreasonable for us to expect to find a clear and explicit account in the Scriptures of fallen angels. It is the silence of Scripture on this subject, which first led me to enquire into the evidences of the doctrine. *The scene* of this apostacy is said to be in heaven, *and the time*, prior to the fall of man. If we look for an account of this fall of angels, where we find that of the fall of man, and where we might reasonably expect to find it, most strange it is, that both Moses and the prophets say nothing of so extraordinary an event. Again, neither our blessed Lord nor his Apostles, have left any account of this revolt in heaven, and again it does appear strange, that the sacred writers should refer to no earlier state of things than the *creation*, whilst the doctrine of fallen angels, carries us far *beyond* that period, and to scenes that were acted, we know not where, and in which as human beings, we cannot perceive how we should feel interested. This doctrine of fallen angels, strange it is to say, seems to rest upon two detached passages of Scripture,

which we will now endeavour to examine. The first appears, in the 2 Peter 2c. 4v. "If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to *hell*, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment, &c." The second passage appears in Jude 1c. 6v. the words of our text, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." As we have before stated, the word *angel* means messenger, our next enquiry is then, whether the messengers here spoken of were men, or beings of a superior order? The Apostle Peter commences this chapter by referring to false prophets amongst the Jewish people; and to any person who will read at his leisure this chapter carefully, it cannot but appear that the Apostle could not refer to a race of beings different to men, and to speak of them as messengers or angels, who had never been messengers to men, but to individuals, who had denied and rebelled against the redeemer of *Israel*, and who by their rebellious conduct had brought upon themselves swift destruction, having forsaken "the right way and gone astray following the way of Balaam the son of *Bosor*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." And so of Jude, this Apostle instead of leading his converts into conjectural suppositions concerning the world of spirits, refers them to certain notorious facts, to which none of his converts were strangers, and which he meant to apply to their serious edification. He says in the verse preceding our text "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the *Lord* having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them who believed not." Now this passage appears evidently to refer to the miraculous redemption of the children of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh! to shew that notwithstanding they had experienced great deliverance from God, yet almost the whole of them subsequently perished in the wilderness, as a punishment for their rebellious opposition to the supreme being,



these words of the Apostle Jude then, not only immediately refer to this calamitous event in the history of the Jews, but relate also to another well known fact in their records, viz., to that part of it already stated, “ And the Angels which kept not their first estate.” Here the Apostle, observe, introduces the word “ *and*” to point out a continued narrative, or to shew that his converts were as well acquainted with the history of the revolting *angels*, as with that of the Jews who perished in the wilderness. From hence it is easy to discover who were the angels or messengers referred to by both Peter and Jude. By turning to the 13th and 14th chapters of the book of Numbers, we shall probably be assisted in understanding the language of the two apostles. Moses it appears sent out twelve messengers to spy out the land of Canaan, but that ten of these, proving unfaithful, having brought up an evil report of the land, having asserted that it was a land of barrenness, abounding with a race of giants, before whom they were as grasshoppers, and that they were too weak to subdue it—these false witnesses were instantly destroyed by the plague. Thus then we see how these *angels or messengers* kept not their first estate, and why they were instantly deprived of the sacred trust reposed in them. Thus we perceive that these messengers not only *falsified*, but were traitors and enemies to their nation, and gave themselves up to the works of iniquity. In this manner they denied that God, who brought them out of the house of bondage, and *left their habitation* by renouncing or forfeiting their inheritance in the promised land, and for this violation of their allegiance, their miserable lives were cut off by a stroke of the divine power—and for their great wickedness, we are informed, “ they are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day ;” which surely means that they are now under the invincible power of death, and will continue bound with his adamant chains, in the darkness of the grave, till the trumpet of God, (that is the power of God) shall awake them and all mankind, from the slumber of death, and place them at the righteous tribunal of the

sovereign judge of all. This view of the texts under consideration, appears to receive additional confirmation from the fact, that the apostle refers his converts, to well known examples of sinners who suffered the just punishments of God for their incorrigible iniquities. “ Even saith the Apostle, as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” By *eternal fire*, we are evidently to understand in this place, *not the commonly received notion of eternal fire in hell*, but *that fire* which continued burning until those cities were consumed, or the fire which consumed them for ever. Hence, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are said to have suffered the vengeance of *eternal fire*. But we shall soon direct your thoughts to the consideration of the awful doctrine of eternal punishment : before however we proceed to examine this doctrine, permit us first to occupy two or three moments of your time, by making a few observations on the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse, which has, by some persons, been supposed to teach, that battles were fought in the heavenly world between the devil and his adherents on the one part, and by Christ and his holy angels on the other, which ended in the overthrow and the expulsion of the former, from that blissful state. Observe, we do not presume to understand this extraordinary book of the Revelations, as it is generally termed, being considered incomprehensible by some of the greatest minds that have ever examined the New Testament, it certainly behoves us to remain silent respecting it, but we hope to be pardoned for making a few observations regarding the supposed battles, which it describes as having been fought in heaven. The account of these battles appears to be *symbolical*. The scene described, is supposed to take place on earth, during the gospel age, and to concern its inhabitants : it appears to relate to the protracted contest carried on between the Pagan priesthood, when in the height of its power with the Christian church, which terminated in the overthrow of Pagan power and idolatry. Whether this

interpretation be right or wrong, it is impossible to receive the *vision* of John as reality. To imagine that the Deity ever suffered battles to be fought in that place which is described throughout the Scriptures, as a state into which sin and folly cannot enter and wherein the infirmities of the flesh, sorrowing and sighing, can never be experienced—is to indulge in imagining the occurrence of circumstances in heaven, which the Scriptures do not sanction. From Scripture and reason, we are compelled to believe that the greatest seducers, which as human beings we have to contend with, are our own lusts and the snares of wicked men. “And finally, if the doctrine which many pious Christians have deduced from the Scriptures, concerning fallen angels be true—if the legions of rebellious angelic beings had really been cast down from heaven, such apostates cannot fill the regions of air—cannot whisper sin in every ear—cannot hood-wink the understanding, nor be the spring of all our evil thoughts, seeing as we do from *sacred authority*, “That the angels which kept not their first estate, God hath reserved in *everlasting chains under darkness*, unto the *judgement of the great day*.” Intimately connected with the notion of fallen angels, is the doctrine of satanic agency. According to the popular views of the devil, he is capable of assuming any shape—appearing in any place, and acting in any character. Sometimes he has appeared like an angel of light, sometimes as a serpent, then as a great dragon—sometimes he acts the lion, and then the lamb; occasionally he figures in the *male* and then in the *female* form—he is said to be the spirit and power of the air, but has a considerable intercourse with people on the earth—he sometimes assumes a spiritual, and then a material form, and occasionally, as circumstances may require, changes colour like a chameleon; indeed it is impossible to attempt a description of this wonderful being, neither shall your time be wasted by anything so absurd. But we solicit your patient attention, whilst we enquire, whether such a being is discoverable by nature. When we look abroad into creation, we trace the wisdom, goodness, and skill, of the divine



architect—nay, everything around us, above us, and beneath us, manifest the love of God, and his desire to make men happy; and no where in the whole universe, as far as human knowledge therein extends, can be traced the hand of a malevolent being. Creation itself, presents to the enquiring mind one vast field of study; and the more this is explored, the more beautiful and useful every atom of it appears. In no part of this wonderful and costly universe, can the mind assign a place for the dominion of Satan. And in nothing that occurs to man or beast, is it necessary to call in the aid of any being, like what the devil is supposed to be, to account for its origin. Is it not evident that the devil exists chiefly in imagination? Some may think that his existence is necessary to account for what has appeared to them the origin of evil. But why it may be asked, are we to attribute those circumstances or events which form a part of our mental and moral discipline, to an evil being, as the devil is represented to be, when they can be shewn to be means for our improvement, and under the direction of an infinitely wise and good being? It is well worthy the calm consideration of us all, whether all the evil as it is called, which ever existed, if weighed against all the *good* that has ever been produced, would preponderate? For our own part we are satisfied, that *good* more than *evil*, prevails in the world; and that more of happiness than misery, falls to the lot of man. It is the opinion of many able divines and scholars, that the popular notion of a devil, had its rise from polytheism and idolatry, with which opinion we cordially agree. From nature we do not learn the existence of the devil, although the notion most undoubtedly arose from an entire ignorance of nature, and of those magnificent laws by which she is governed. Now if the universe is governed by fixed laws, to admit the existence of a being that can so alter those laws as almost to render them nugatory, is surely very absurd. For instance, if the supreme being created this world for man's happiness—for his good, which no persons will surely



deny, and then created a being that shall thwart his own merciful intentions or design respecting the human race, what shall we think of the wisdom of God? And if it does appear that God created man, and placed him in this world, to be prepared for an other, and a better, by the cultivation of his mind—by the attainments of virtuous principles, and then prevents him from doing so by allowing the agency of the devil, it is impossible from this view of our moral condition to believe, that we have been placed in a state, the best adapted for the attainment of so important an end. The Scriptures which are said to favour the existence of the devil, clearly teach, that miracles can only be wrought by the power of God. But it is a fact, that the works assigned to the devil, are generally supernatural. The question then is, how does he act? does he act independently of God? Then he is equal to the task of resisting the laws of nature! Who will admit this doctrine. If then he is not capable of resisting the divine laws, he must act under their authority—with their sanction, and shall we believe for one moment, that the infinitely wise and just God, employs an agent for the accomplishment of the worst of purposes, to entice men to sin, that they may have no peace of mind here or hereafter but must suffer from his sinful artifices eternally? The popular notion of a devil, appears to involve mankind in an awful dilemma, unworthy of human credence. Again, the popular notion of a devil, attributes to him powers which only belong to omnipotence. He is frequently described as the cause of gross crimes in all parts of the world, at one and the same time; he tempts man in the four quarters of the world at one and the same moment, to the commission of the most horrid crimes: how, then, can he be less than omnipresent; and if he does it by indirect means, by agents, (for some persons maintain that his name being Legion, he has at his command innumerable messengers of mischief,) he then must be supposed to have a knowledge of those who are likely to be seduced by the wholesome agent whom he dispatches on an errand of temptation. If it be thought, that this

view of satanic influence is confined to the most ignorant of our race, so much the more should we pity them for entertaining such views of the moral government of God, and endeavour by all the means in our power to remove from their minds so absurd a notion. The belief in satanic influence gave rise, in a very early age of the world, to *witches* and *wizards*, *sorcerers* and *fortune tellers*; nay, so prevalent was this notion, that our blessed Saviour himself was supposed to have performed his stupendous miracles by the agency of the devil, or by Beelzebub the prince of devils. Now, observe the contradictory notions entertained respecting him: *for instance*, he is called a *prince*, and then the most degraded of beings—he is said to be in chains, but enjoys very great liberty—to be shut up in darkness, yet represented as being very busy in broad day light. Probably some may imagine that the doctrine of satanic influence, is absolutely necessary to account for the evil passions of men, and the generality of sin which abounds in the world; but surely these may be accounted for from the impressions made on the human mind by external objects, the various associations of ideas, and the influence of evil example. In this opinion we are confirmed by the language of the apostle James, “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.” If it be argued, that we cannot account for the introduction of sin into the world, without supposing the existence of a devil to tempt man to the commission of it, it is replied, “it certainly would not be less difficult to account for the introduction of sin among pure spirits in heaven, and their transformation into devils, without a devil previously existing to tempt them, than to account for the origin of sin among pure creatures on earth without a devil to introduce it.” A creature placed in a state of trial, must be capable of acting either right or wrong, and it is no more difficult to account for his acting wrong, than it would be to account for his acting always right. If we view man, as he really is, a creature who enters this world in blank ignorance, born without one

idea, having every thing as it respects morals to attain—a creature made to be the pupil of experience, with a desire of happiness, that increases with an increasing power of obtaining it; we want nothing more to account for his every action.” By examining carefully the nature of the human mind, we shall form a more correct opinion of the origin of sin. What is mind? is a very important enquiry. We answer, it comprehends the exercise of all our senses, such as seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, and touching, these are all brought into operation by the objects with which we are surrounded. Hence then, when man is said to have done wrong, to have committed an offence either against God, or his fellow man, it is evident, he has acted on the partial suggestion of one or two of his senses, and not on the evidence of all of them. Moreover, man is gifted with judgement or reason—he can decide on the consequences of things, on the right or wrong use of each and every of his senses; with this view of man, it is evident, he is an accountable being—accountable for the use or abuse of his every sense. If he follow the mere direction of his senses, without also the exercise of reason, it is evident, such a man has been guided merely by his animal desires. Hence then temptations to sin arise from the exercise of our senses, and the means of avoiding sin is to reason and deliberate on their tendencies. The object which attracted the attention of Eve, led her to do that which she was forbidden to do by her Creator. Here is an instance of disobedience to God arising from Eve’s want of exercising her reason on the consequences of her conduct, and thus Eve’s disobedience may be sufficiently accounted for without the aid of satanic influence. This view of Eve’s temptation, surely appears much more rational than the allegorical representation of the fall by Moses. We say allegorical, for the lying spirit introduced in the form and under the name of a serpent, is evidently to account for the subtle insinuating manner in which our senses, unaided by reason, lead us into error. To use the language of Theophilus Lindsey, who devoted much attention to the Mosaic account of the fall “ that



Moses intended his description of the fall to be only allegorical, is evident from his never mentioning any thing afterwards in all his four books that follow, concerning such an evil being and dangerous tempter to mankind, which he certainly would have done had there been any reality in it." But we know the power of prejudice, and how difficult it is to remove a preconceived opinion from the human mind; it is very likely to blind our eyes against plain truths, but whilst some are willing to retain the doctrine of satanic influence, and indisposed to believe that the Mosaic account of the fall is allegorical, it is their duty to allow those who have examined equally with themselves, the evidence of the fall, to infer its allegorical character. But, as nature does not afford any evidence of a devil, we will turn to the Scriptures, and enquire of them what they say upon this subject, as many persons contend that frequent mention of the word devil in the Scriptures, is an evidence of his existence. But to do this, it is incumbent to shew that the term devil, Satan, &c. are proper names, the names of organized beings—that they do not express moral qualities. For instance, the word *serpent*, if it be applied, as it unquestionably is, to other beings besides serpents, it cannot in this sense describe its own race, but rather some moral quality. For instance, Jesus called the Jews a generation of *vipers*, by which he meant deceivers. And the word *devil* is very commonly used in the sacred writings to mean an accuser, an enemy, a slanderer, as a personification of evil as a principle. When Jesus called Judas a devil, he meant a slanderer; and when Paul speaks of the wives of Christian deacons, he says they must not be slanderers. Here our translators have very properly rendered the word *diabolos*, not devils, but slanderers. Had the Greek word been rendered accuser, slanderer, or enemy, the English reader would have soon gathered from the context what kind of enemy the apostle intended. The word *devil* being an appellative, it affords no proof of the real existence of such a being as the devil is represented to be. Again, the Hebrew word *Satan*, like the Greek



word *diabolos*, means accuser, an adversary, and may be such among *angels* as well as among bad men; for instance, in Numbers 22c. 3v. "And the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, behold I went out to withstand thee for *an adversary*." So in 2 Sam. 19c. 22v. "Ye sons of Zeruah are adversaries." Thus either appellative may be applied to any persons who slander, accuse, and persecute. Hence then, the word *Satan* describes no specific being, but a quality or qualities—bad actions—bad dispositions. Sometimes bodily diseases have been personified and called Satan, Luke 13c. 16v. "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom *Satan* hath bound lo this eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day." Here the disease under which the woman had been suffering so many years, which was removed by our Saviour on the sabbath day, was called Satan. This translation will appear correct, as we proceed in our present enquiry. The word *dragon* in the *Apocalypse*, is supposed to convey the modern notion of a devil. Now what does the dragon represent, evidently wordly power, by its heads and horns; and by its length of body, the duration of idolatry, and the persecution of the saints. This may be seen by referring to Isaiah 27c. 1v. Where the Lord is said "to punish *Leviathan the piercing serpent*, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Here the Prophet makes the *whale*, serpent, and dragon represent the same evil, *i. e.* the symbol of a visible, fierce, and powerful persecution. So in 51c. and 9v. of the same Prophet: see also Ezekiel 29c. Here the language used, cannot possibly apply to a fallen apostate spirit as the devil is represented to be. The prophecies in which these terms appear, refer to historical epochs or events. The phrase or term, "*prince of this world*," evidently means love of the world, which is opposed to the kingdom of Christ, or to the universal empire of virtue. As the one represents the vices of mankind, hatred, malice, deception, and war, so Jesus Christ is called the prince of peace, the light of the world, the agent by whom mankind are to be made

subjects of a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness and peace. The expression prince of this world, does not mean a wicked ruler of the world, exercising a tyrannical power over men's minds, making them sinners contrary to their desires, no more than our blessed Saviour can be supposed to have unlimited sway over men's consciousness, compelling them to become subjects of his kingdom of virtue. Besides, taking for granted to be true, the doctrine of human depravity, which is done merely for the sake of argument—mankind would not be so ignorant and depraved, as implicitly to follow the suggestions of the prince of the air, which would involve the most dreadful consequences, rather than be guided by Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, which would effect their eternal happiness. Again, the devil is called the "*god of this world.*" Here the Devil, alias serpent, Satan, dragon, prince of this world, is now *deified*, simply, because the great apostle Paul used this expression once in reference to the spirit of the world, which he perceived, pervaded the hearts of men, more than the spirit of virtue, or the love of God. Or the apostle might have referred to the spirit of men in his age, attaching themselves to a religion, which was constituted of show, of pompous ceremonies, and which lead them to despise the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have no authority for believing that the Apostle referred to the devil. In all the appellations which have been used to personify evil or vice as opposed to virtue, they afford no proof that a being really exists, who can be *material*, and then *immaterial*—assume any shape, or act in any character, for the purpose of thwarting the benevolent designs of a kind and merciful God, towards the children of men. The very idea that an infinitely wise and just God should create a being capable of eluding the utmost vigilance of the human race to detect his machinations, so that they might prevent themselves from falling victims to his artifices, is so opposed to reason and Scripture, as not to deserve the least credit. How the Deity can be said not to will the

death of sinners, while at the same time he is employing, or suffers an agent, nearly equal to himself, to make *men sinners*, is more than we can at present understand. In the Mosaic account of the fall, we are told, “ that the *serpent* more subtle than any beast of the field, tempted Eve ;” but in what respect the serpent was more subtle or crafty than any other beast, we are not informed. In reading natural history, particularly zoology, we find many animals evincing more of design, skill, and cunning in their habits than did the serpent which tempted Eve, instance the elephant, the horse, the beaver, and the dog. If, however, the subtlety of the serpent means its natural habit of secreting itself to avoid detection, it may be asked, what animals in their wild state will not do this? There are some serpents harmless, and even the most venomous of their tribe, are capable of being tamed. Again there are some serpents when satiated with food, are helpless, and in this state may be taken without difficulty or danger, and be destroyed. Now Moses does not describe the genus of the serpent that tempted Eve, and we in this age, are left to conjecture to what peculiar class of serpents the one belonged which tempted Eve; the very fact of its reasoning and conversing with Eve, stamps the whole history of the fall with a fabulous character. We do not mean to say that the Deity could not have made a serpent to hold a conversation with a human being, but surely it must appear unnecessary to believe that the serpent which tempted Eve, did really speak, to account for her disobedience. One thing is also evident in the account of Eve’s transgression, that whether the serpent had the gift of speech or not, Moses does not say that a *fallen angel* or the *devil* tempted her. And if the fall was effected by a fallen angel, Moses has not given an exact account of the whole affair. From what has been said on this subject, we cannot but think that Moses’s description of the fall is highly figurative, and that the serpent is a personification of disobedience. The very circumstances of the serpent’s walking erect, conversing with Eve, becoming guilty, and condemned to eat dust, confirm us in this opinion, for none of these circumstances are li-



terally true. "They shall no more offer their sacrifices to devils," has been quoted to favour the notion of devils, but Dr. Gill and other able commentators have shewn, that the Hebrew word, here rendered *devils*, means goats, or hairy animals. Besides, there is no argument to shew that the Israelites ever sacrificed to apostate spirits. The Egyptians sacrificed to hairy animals, and in Deut. 32c. 17v., we read, "They sacrificed unto devils not to God," which refers to the false Gods whom the Gentiles worshipped. In Judges 9c. 23v., we read "God sent an evil spirit between *Abimelech* and the men of *Shechem*," which means that God suffered animosity and discord to arise between them which did good in producing the just punishment of their crimes. In 1 Samuel 16c. 14v., "An evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul;" are we to infer from hence that the devil was sent from the Lord to Saul, if so it is not very likely that the tones of David's harp would have driven him away, and diverted him from his purpose. That the evil spirit with which Saul was harassed was mental despondency, is more probable, because the cheerful music of David's harp "refreshed Saul and he was well." But it is time that we turned to the book of Job, the most ancient history or rather poem extant, and of which says *Pope* with regard to sublimity of thought and morality, exceeds beyond all comparison, the most noble parts of Homer. The Book of Job was evidently written to shew how a good man can endure the severest visitations of Providence. Hence the afflictions of Job are represented as coming from the hand of God. And we should ever bear in mind when reading the book of Job, that it is a poem, and of course the boldness of imagery which pervades this poem, is in accordance with the Eastern style of writing: the poem appears to be the history of real character, and a more affecting history cannot possibly be found. From a very able translation of Job by the Rev. Thos. Scott, who once occupied this very pulpit, and from other authors skilled in learning and in a sound knowledge of the Scriptures, we learn that the imagery of this poem cannot be understood literally, because it is evidently borrowed from



an earthly court. And if taken literally, we should then find a difficulty in reconciling to our minds the idea that so noxious a being as the devil could have held a familiar intercourse with infinite purity, to become acquainted with Job's character, and then that this Deity should afflict a righteous man at the instigation of the devil. But why admit this, when the immediate agents of Job's afflictions are all mentioned? The Sabceans stole his cattle; the *fire of God* (most probably lightning) fell upon his sheep and destroyed them; the Chaldeans carried away his *camels*: and a great wind swept away the house wherein his sons and daughters were feasting, and they perished in the ruins. Where then, in this sad picture of human misery, do we find the agency of the devil or Satan? unless we believe that the devil has under his control the elements of nature. And the loathsome disease with which Job was smitten, as it is said of *Satan*, was evidently believed by Job to be the act of God. As a proof of this says Mr. Scott "Job himself and other human speakers in the poem constantly represent his calamities as the immediate act of God. They therefore had no idea of this evil being, (meaning the devil or Satan) nor of his agency in human affairs. In this sense he is never once mentioned throughout the poem." The word devil occurs once in the Psalms 106th, "They sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils," *i. e.* as we read in the next verse, to the idols of Canaan. In Psalm 109th, we read "Let Satan stand at his right hand," which Dr. Geddes renders thus, "at his right hand be placed the accuser." The word devil does not occur in the prophetic writings—the word *Satan* occurs once in Ezekiel, 3c. 1v., "and Satan standing at his (Joshua's) right hand to resist him." Here is reference to some person or persons, who opposed *Joshua*, when employed in restoring the worship of God. Who this opposer was, may be gathered from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. If we turn to the Gospels which are supposed to abound with references to the devil, it is remarkable, how seldomly the word devil occurs therein in the original; and it is something very much like an unjust liberty, that

our translators have taken, in using the word devil for demon, or devils for demons. "The term demoniac, or being possessed with demons, was never used by the ancients, to signify any thing vicious, or immoral in character, but only bodily defects and disease, or alienation and disorder of the mind. *Vide*, Farmer, Lindsey, Scott, Benson, and Priestley. The devil is spoken of in three places in the Gospel of St. Matthew, 4c. 1 to 11v. 13c. 39v. and 25c. 41v. The 4th chapter contains the history of our Lord's temptation, which is supposed by some to form the most daring act in the devil's history. And certainly if Jesus Christ was God Almighty, who made the world and all things therein, and was led to believe by this tempter, that he could stand upon a mountain which he had himself established, to see all the kingdoms of the world, (as if the Almighty wanted to be led by a devil to a mountain, from the top of which he might see the works of his own hands, who sees all things from their beginning to their ending) we repeat if this temptation is to be taken literally, then it records the boldest act of the devil's history. But if we look a little closer into this affair, we think it will appear rather a passing vision, than a real transaction. It is natural to ask what kind of spirit it was that tempted our Saviour? Whether it was an impetuous movement of his own mind, or an evil spirit, or the power of God. The term *led up* implies impelled, or lifted up, says, Mr. Lindsey, with violence, although the person so lifted up is passive in the affair. To say that an evil spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness, to be tempted by the evil spirit appears a frivolous repetition, and would it not be contrary to the character of our Lord, which partook of prudence and wisdom, to suppose that he placed himself in the way of temptation; and how would this idea accord with that beautiful prayer which he offered to the Father to be preserved from temptation? Again we are told, "The devil took him up into a high mountain, in a moment of time," according to St. Luke, "to show him all the kingdoms of the world." The whole of the circumstances of

this temptation, carry on their very face, a visionary character. It cannot be taken literally—how then shall it be received? We feel persuaded both Matt. and Luke, intended it should be received as a vision. If however we persist in its literal acceptance, we must do it at the expense of truth, and the credibility of the Scriptures. But it is proper to observe, that this temptation as it is called, took place after our Saviour had been fasting forty days. How probable it is, that in this exhausted state of body, he sat down and fell into a sleep. We all know how easy and naturally the mind whilst the body is resting, imagines a thousand things, undertakes long journeys, converses with friends long dead, flies over the ocean, and climbs the loftiest heights. That our Saviour should imagine himself conversing with some evil and powerful enemy, is not improbable, particularly if we bear in mind that the notion of a malevolent being was prevalent in our Saviour's time amongst the Israelites, which probably they acquired during their captivity, from the Chaldeans. Another important consideration to be noticed is, that the interview between Christ and the devil, wants the attestation of real history. All the important events in our Lord's life, such as his *miracles, transfiguration, death, resurrection, and ascension*, occurred before credible witnesses, and some of whom committed to writing what they saw with their own eyes. What solid objection Christians can have to admit the temptation of our Lord to be visionary, we cannot see. If they imagine that its literal acceptance will better serve the cause of truth and holiness, they are surely mistaken, and how by thus treating the beautiful allegories in the Old and New Testament, will they bring over unbelievers to Christianity? Besides, visionary representations are not unfrequent in the sacred writings—see Matt. 17c. 9v., Luke 1c. 22v., Acts 10c. 17, 19v., 11c. 5v., the Apocalypse was a vision. Again, the spirit entering into Ezekiel, is unquestionably a vision, see 3c. 12v. the 40c. 2v. “In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel and set me upon a very high mountain.” And now admitting this



temptation to be a vision, and it will be difficult to prove it otherwise—what was its use? Remember, the Saviour was about entering upon his public ministry, to act as a moral pattern to the world—to lay the foundation of an universal kingdom of righteousness, not a sectarian kingdom, one constituted of truth, justice, and charity. How much depended on his performing the great task assigned him virtuously. Hence it appears, that it pleased providence to exercise the piety and virtue of his son and messenger to mankind, in so singular a manner, and by a vision, to afford him some glimpse of his future life and sufferings. The vision taught him the proper use of his divine powers, *i. e.* not to use them merely to cause the ignorant to gaze, and the wise to applaud, but rather to further the good cause he was sent to advocate. To cast himself down from the temple, was a lesson to him, not rashly to venture upon danger, and then expect an extraordinary deliverance, but calmly to determine on every effort, to support truth, and wisely to ponder on every means he employed to establish his gospel. Before we conclude, we will briefly notice a few passages of Scripture in the Epistles, which are supposed to countenance the popular notion of a devil. The first we shall notice is in Rom. 16c. 20v. “The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly” the Satan here means, saith Dr. Hammond, those Jews and heathens who opposed christianity, probably accusing it of want of evidence. 1. Cor. 7c. 5v. “*That Satan tempt you not for your incontinency*” means let not your natural desires lead you to act contrary to the christian character and profession. 2. Cor. 2c. 11v. “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us—for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Here the apostle refers to some person who opposed him. This opposer was evidently a man, as appears from the 11c. 14v. of the same Epistle, because he whom Paul called Satan was transformed into an *angel of light*, *i. e.* he became a preacher of the gospel, how else can we understand the transformation? We read in 1. Thessa. 2c. 18v. “*Satan hindered us.*” Here the oppo-



sition which the Apostle and his companions met in visiting Thessalonica, personified and called Satan, Ephes. 4c. 27v. "Neither give place to the devil" evidently alludes to *slander*. Chap. 6. 11v. "*The wiles of the Devil*" refers to the Pagan enemies of christianity. In Heb. 2c. 14v. the word devil means the Jewish law, which was also called the ministry of *condemnation*. It was the killing power of that law, that Christ *destroyed* or *abolished*. We have now noticed most of those passages of Scripture which are supposed to teach the existence of a being whose power over, and whose malignity to man, is dreadful to contemplate: from all such texts, we have derived no positive proof of such a being existing in the world; and we feel persuaded, that the more such passages are examined, the less will they be seen to countenance, the vulgar and Pagan notion of the devil. Sincerely do we pray that the thoughts embodied in this Lecture may lead you to examine the Scriptures for yourselves, that the honour of God, the cause of truth, and of true piety—that which is founded on love, and not that which arises from fear, may be thereby advanced. The notion of a devil going about the world, to tempt men into all kinds of vice, has done much to strengthen the cause of unbelief, and demoralize mankind. The devil's temptations have been pleaded as an excuse for the assassin's sanguinary deeds—parricide, matricide, and suicide. Nay, it represents man, who is said to be a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour, debasing and condemning himself by a kind of necessity; and moreover if the doctrine of satanic influence be true, the moral accountability of man is completely overthrown, and with it, every principle of justice, mercy and love, in the divine administration. To the old, and to the *young particularly*, suffer me to say, the object in removing from your minds, the belief in the devil, is not to open up to you a clear broad road to vice, *God forbid*, but that you should be placed as God intended you should be placed in the present life, on your own responsibilities. Remember, you are rational,

moral beings, with virtue and vice set before you for your choice, and with a capability of refusing the one or the other—that your present and final happiness, depends on your choice of these two principles. Examine the nature and consequences of both, and then you will soon decide which of the two you will accept and cherish.

## LECTURE VII.

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### ON THE ETERNITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

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*Gal. vi. 7.*

BE NOT DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED, FOR WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH, THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP.

WITH the doctrines of fallen angels and satanic influence, is connected, that of hell,—torments,—a place of eternal punishment for all the wicked. Into this as well as into every other religious subject, we ought never to be prevented by the cry of heresy, from making, as far as we are able, a full enquiry. Whatever be the result of our present enquiry into the doctrine of eternal punishment, it cannot alter the benevolent purposes of God respecting the human race, neither do we hope it will lessen our love and esteem for all true Christians who may entertain different views to ours, on this important subject. There are four words in the original language of the Bible, translated hell. These are *Sheol*, *Hades*, *Tartarus*, and *Gehenna*. The two first words are *sometimes* translated *grave* as well as *hell*; the other words *Tartarus* and *Gehenna*, are *invariably*

translated *hell*. There is one circumstance worth your notice, and which may have probably escaped your observation and that of many readers of the Bible; it is this, that the word *hell* does not occur once in all the Old Testament! where it means a place of eternal misery for the wicked. We shall not labour under any suspicion of having made a wrong statement, if you my friends will take the trouble to examine this matter for yourselves, as we trust we have done. This is no new discovery; many learned divines have noticed this fact, which if time permitted, might easily be shewn by reference to their writings. The word *Sheol*, says *Dr. Campbell*, signifies the state of the dead in general, without regard to the goodness or badness of the persons—their happiness or misery. This word is sometimes used in rendering the nearly synonymous phrases *bor* and *abne bor*—the pit and stones of the pit *tsalmoth*, the shades of death, *dumeh* silence. The figures employed to represent this state, are always something dark and silent, about which the most prying eye and listening ear, cannot acquire any information. Hence then, we see that the original meaning of the word *Sheol*, and its correspondent word *Hades*, were not terms which implied that place of punishment believed in by some Christians, as the place for the punishment of the wicked. The word *Sheol*, in the original, occurs in the Old Testament sixty-four times, and rendered by our translators, three times *pit*, twenty-nine times *grave*, and thirty-two times *hell*. Let us now attend to the texts in which the word *Sheol* is translated *pit*, as in Num. 16c. 30-33v., to ascertain if possible its true meaning. Korah and his company are said to go down quick into the pit, which is fully explained by “the earth opening her mouth and swallowing them up.” Had *Sheol* been translated *hell* here, as in other places, then according to the vulgar notion of *hell*, Korah went down both soul and body alive, to the place of eternal misery. But this would be contrary to common belief, for it is not admitted that men’s bodies go there before the resurrection; all that appears to be implied in this account of Korah, is,

that the judgement of God which visited him and his ruler, was an earthquake, and does not relate to their eternal condition. The next passage in which the word Sheol is rendered pit, is in Job 17c. 16v., it says, they, *i. e.*, men “shall go down to the bars of the pit”—and what Job meant is explained in the very next words, “when our rest together is in the dust.” Let us next examine those texts wherein the word Sheol is translated *grave*. The first three places in which it occurs, are Gen. 37c. 35v., 42c. 38v., and 44c. 29v. Now had Sheol been translated hell in these texts, as it is in many others, Joseph would be represented as in *hell*, and that his father Jacob expected soon to follow him to the same place. And Hezekiah would then be made to say, “I shall go to the gates of hell,” and to say *hell* cannot praise thee. But let *Sheol* be translated *hell* instead of *grave*, in the following texts, and then we think it will appear to every one who is accustomed to examine the sacred writings, that these authors did not attach the idea of a place of future misery to the word *Sheol*. For instance, Job would be made to say, in 17c. 13v., “If I wait, hell is my house.” And again to pray, 14c. 13v. “O that thou wouldst hide me in hell.” It would make David say, Psalm 88 3v. “My life draweth nigh unto *hell*; and in Psalm 6 5v., “in hell who shall give thee thanks.” To translate *Sheol*, *hell*, as it is understood generally, would be to represent David as a monster of cruelty: in the following verses, instance, his address to his son Solomon, just before his death, 1 Kings 2c. 6v. concerning Job, “Let not his hoary head go down *to hell* in peace.” And concerning Shimei he adds, “but his hoary head bring thou down with blood.” David says in Psalm 31 17v. “Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in hell.” Besides, there are passages of Scripture where, if the popular notion of hell be true, and *Sheol* means hell, we find men going down into *hell*, and coming out of *hell*; for instance, 1 Sam. 2c. 6v. “The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to hell and bringeth up.” And



David says, in Psalm 30 3v. "O Lord thou hast brought up my soul from hell." But what David means, is explained in the next words, "Thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit." Now these passages cannot possibly be understood to mean the place of eternal misery, for neither David nor any one else was ever brought down to such a place, and afterwards brought up from it. Besides, Job declares 7c. 9v.; "He that goeth down to hell shall come up no more," which contradicts what was said in the previous passages, about persons brought up from hell. And if Sheol meant the place of the wicked, the following translations would represent *all men* as going to hell; for instance, in Psalm 89 48v. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death, shall he deliver his soul from the hand of hell?" notwithstanding which David says, Psalm 49 15v., "But God will redeem my soul from the power of hell." Surely a sufficient number of texts have been produced to show, that the Hebrew word *Sheol*, translated hell, grave, and pit, cannot possibly mean the common notion of hell. But before we conclude our observations on this subject, allow us to remark once more, that if Sheol be translated *hell*, instead of grave, it makes Solomon say, Eccle. 9c. 10v., "There is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in hell," &c. But this cannot be said of the place of eternal misery, and shows that Solomon by *Sheol*, did not mean *hell*, in that sense in which it is now received, but evidently alluded to the silent grave, the house appointed for all living. Every candid mind must acknowledge, that Sheol and hell, or the place of eternal misery, cannot agree, and that if the word be understood to teach the doctrine of *hell punishment*, then it involves many passages of the *Old Testament* writings in considerable doubt. The last passage in which Sheol is translated grave, is Hosea 13c. 14v., "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death, O death I will be thy plague, O grave, *or hell*, I will be thy destruction." Now if Sheol translated grave, and in other places

*hell*, means a place of eternal misery, it is evident from the language of Hosea, that men are to be ransomed from it, and the place itself destroyed. "I will ransom them from the power of hell, and O *hell*, I will be thy destruction". It surely must appear from this, that those who believe *Sheol*, to be the place of endless misery, ought to give this notion up, for if they do not, they must admit that neither the place, nor its punishment, is to be of eternal duration; and if *Sheol* translated pit, grave, hell, does not mean by either of these terms a place of endless torment, then it follows, that the Old Testament writers do not teach such a doctrine. Having now examined most of the passages of the *Old Testament* Scriptures wherein *Sheol* is translated grave, we will now consider other passages, wherein the word is translated *hell*, and being used thirty-two times in the Old Testament writings, you will we hope pardon our omission of some of them, as a reference to every instance in which the word *Sheol* is rendered *hell*, would occupy a considerable portion of our time. *Hell*, evidently means the grave or the state of the dead. Thus Solomon speaking of a vicious woman, says Prov. 7c. 27v., "Her house is the way to *hell*," which he explains, by remarking immediately afterwards by going down to the chambers of death, and this is absolutely confirmed by Psalm 5 5v., "Her feet go down to death," which is explained by the following words, "her steps take hold on *hell*." *Sheol*, whether translated *pit*, *grave*, or *hell*, is represented as *below*, *beneath*, and also as a great depth. Persons are always said to go down to it. Its depth is contrasted with heaven's height. Thus in Prov. 15c. 24v., "The way of life is above to the wise, that they may depart from *hell* beneath." Again, "It is high in heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than *hell*, what canst thou know." See also Amos 9c. 2v., Psalm 139 8v. But it is worthy of remark, that *Sheol* is not only rendered *hell*, and as a great depth, but as the lowest *hell*. Thus in Deut. 32c. 22v. "for a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest *hell*, and shall consume the earth with her

increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.” We are aware, that it has been common to assign the very lowest hell, as the place for the worst of characters; but whatever sense we put on the phrase, *lowest* it is, the same place of which David speaks in Psalm 86 13v., “for great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.” This surely cannot mean, that David, the man after God’s own heart, was delivered from eternal misery, but from the lowest grave. But who will presume to say, that this language of David’s is not figurative, and if it be said this is begging the question, we then humbly hope, that those who interpret it literally, will also find out a way to escape the consequence of involving the passage in much perplexity. In endeavouring to account for the form of expression, lowest hell, we find learned commentators of orthodox and heterodox sentiments, consider it to have originated from the dead being sometimes cast into pits, the depth of which was as little known as the height of the highest heaven, or place of exaltation. When common honors were paid the dead, they were put in caves, or decently interred in vaults. But persons who were deemed unworthy funeral *honors* were generally cast into pits outside the city walls, the depths of which were unknown. Most probably the depth of these unknown graves, gave rise to the expression *depths of hell*—just as the unknown height of heaven, gave rise to this expression, the highest heavens. In Isaiah 5c. 14v., it is said, “Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure, and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.” This may truly be said of the *grave*, but with no propriety, can it be said of a place of eternal misery. The Prophet Hab. 2c. 5v., speaking of a proud ambitious man, says, “He enlargeth his desire as *hell*, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied,” terms which signify the same thing. In Prov. 27c. 20. “Hell and destruction are never full.” In the texts before quoted, where *Sheol* is translated grave, as

well as in these passages, it is evident, the inspired writers, although the original word is rendered differently, sometimes *hell* and sometimes *grave*, yet mean the same thing: the context of all these passages sufficiently prove, that the *grave* or the state of the dead is meant, and not a place of eternal misery. The last text in which *Sheol* is translated *hell*, is to be found in the 9th Psalm 17v. "The wicked shall be turned into *hell*, and all the nations who forget God." There is no text in which *Sheol* occurs, which has been more frequently quoted than this, to prove that by *hell* is meant that place wherein the wicked are to suffer misery. Here the wicked are the persons spoken of, and of them *it is said they shall be turned into hell* with all the nations who forget God. This rendering of the passage of David appears plausible, but by consulting the context, we shall find that the idea of future eternal punishment was not intended by the Psalmist. Observe, the Psalmist in these words, is treating of God's temporal judgements upon the heathen nations. This view of it appears confirmed by the 15th and 20th verses, "The heathen are sunk in the *pit* that they made, in the net which they hid, is their own foot taken." "Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men." How this passage of the 9th Psalm came to be understood as referring to a place of eternal misery, is most extraordinary, and we have yet to learn that *Sheol* had any such meaning. Is it not evident that *hell* into which the wicked are in the 9th Psalm said to be turned, is the same *hell* into which Jacob said he would go down to Joseph mourning—the same into which David prayed that the wicked might go down quick, or alive. The same in which the soul of our Saviour was not left to see corruption; and how can we believe that David prayed that the wicked might go down alive to a place of endless misery; and that Korah and his company did go there alive? And the advocates for endless misery cannot themselves believe, that all the heathen nations were consigned to future endless punishment. But probably some may object to this view of the text in the 9th Psalm, and



ask, are not all good people turned into the *grave* as well as the wicked—why then is it said that the wicked shall be turned into *hell* with all the nations that forget God? The answer to this enquiry is easy. Though all good people in David's day went into *Sheol* as well as the wicked, yet not in the way he is here speaking of the wicked. David is speaking of God's public judgements on the heathen, and by those judgements they were to be cut off from the earth, or turned into *Sheol*. Surely it is one thing to die naturally and descend into the grave, and quite another to be cut off from the earth, by the awful visitations of God. We have seen some evidence in favour of our first position, that the word *Sheol* in the Old Testament, translated *pit*, *grave* and *hell*, in the received version, was not used by the sacred writers to express a place of endless misery. Now *Hades* is allowed by all commentators, to be the word in the New Testament, which corresponds with *Sheol*, in the old, and that both express the same thing. Neither in the Old nor New Testament, is a place of endless misery expressed by these words; but before we close our remarks upon this subject, we are anxious to notice a few passages, where *Hades* is used in the New Testament, as confirmatory of what has been already advanced. The word *Hades* is used but eleven times in the New Testament, and in every place rendered hell, with one exception, viz. 1 Cor. 15c. 55v. "O death where is thy sting, O grave," &c. These words are a quotation from *Hosea*, which passage has been already noticed. By comparing this text with that from whence it was borrowed, it is evident that both the prophet and the apostle used this language to show that *Sheol*, *Hades*, or hell shall not always have dominion over the dead. The glorious announcement has been made that death shall be swallowed up in victory, that it shall be destroyed, and this victory, saith the apostle, was obtained through our Lord Jesus Christ, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by his resurrection from the dead. Observe, the apostle is treating of the resurrection, and not of endless misery. Now let

any person contend still for the doctrine of endless punishment, that *Hades* does refer to such a state, yet thanks be to God, a final victory is to be obtained over it ; for the apostle triumphantly asks, “ O *Hades* or *hell* where is thy victory ?” but we ask, what victory could be had over endless misery ? The next word translated *hell* in the common version, is *Tartarus*, and it is somewhat remarkable that it occurs only once in the New Testament, 2 Peter 2c. 4v., “ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to *hell*,” &c. This passage has been already considered in examining the doctrine of fallen angels. And here we regret that time will not allow us to quote the opinions of such men as Dr. Campbell, of Marischal College, Aberdeen, and *Le Clerc* on the religion of the ancient Greeks, vide page 14, respecting the Pagan notion that *Hades* is a place of punishment. From all that can be gathered respecting the words *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Tartarus*, we cannot find that either of these terms signify a place of endless wretchedness or torments for the wicked. To shew this, is all we have felt bound to do in opposing the common notion of endless punishment. If this notion be any where taught in the Scriptures, it must be in the New Testament, where the word *Gehenna* is used in reference to a place of future punishment. Our duty then, is to consider whether the word *Gehenna*, is employed to denote a place of future endless punishment. *Gehenna* is a compound of the two Hebrew words, *gehinnom*, the valley of *Hinnom*, a place in Jerusalem. By turning to the book of Joshua, 15c. 8v., and 18c. 16v., this valley appears to have been situated in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, Jer. 19c. 2v. It was in this valley, that the cruel, and abominable sacrifices of children to *Moloch*, were offered, as appears from the 2 Kings 23c. 10v. Here also, it was, that *Ahaz* and *Manasses*, made their children pass through fire, to this idol god, as you may learn by consulting 2 Chron. 28c. 3v., and 36c. 6v. and Jeremiah 32c. 35v. and 7c. 31-32v. By turning to 18c. 21v. of Leviticus, and the 20c. 1-6v., we find that the Jews were

forbidden, on penalty of *death*, to suffer their children to pass through the *fire* to Moloch. But notwithstanding the severity of the penalty, kings and subjects were guilty of the horrid vice of sacrificing their children to this idol, as the following passages sufficiently prove—Amos 5c. 26v. 1 Kings 11c. 4-8v., Ezek. 16c. 20-21v. In this valley of *Hinnom*, it appears the shameful sacrifices were made to *Moloch*, by passing children through a fire which was constantly kept burning to consume the carcasses and other filth conveyed thither from the city of Jerusalem. In order to give some idea of the sacrifices offered to Moloch, read, at your leisure, the prophecy of Jeremiah 7c. 29v. to the end, and the whole of the 19c. Of the idol itself, we have the following account from *Calmet*, who says “ the idol, Moloch, was of brass, sitting on a throne of the same metal, adorned with a royal crown, having the head of a calf, and his arms extended as if to embrace any one. When they would offer children to him, they heated the statue within by a great fire, and when it was burning hot, they put the miserable victim within his arms, where it was soon consumed by the violence of the heat, and that the cries of the children might not be heard, they made a great noise with drums and other instruments.” Other writers have described this idol as being hollow, containing seven partitions, the first appropriated for the reception of *flour*, the second for *turtles*, the third for an *ewe*, the fourth for a *ram*, the fifth for a *calf*, the sixth for an *ox*, and the seventh for a *child* ; all these were consumed together. This Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, with its dreadful sacrifices, appears to have been used by the prophet Jeremiah, as an emblem of the temporal calamities which were to overtake the Jewish nation. And in this way, it appears to have been also used by our Lord, Matt. 24c. to 22v., but neither by him nor by Jeremiah, was it ever used as an emblem of *future eternal punishment*. Before we proceed to notice the passages of the New Testament, wherein *Gehenna* occurs, let it be recollected, that no word is used in the Old Testament, to express a place of endless punishment for the wicked. The word Ge-



henna occurs twelve times in the New Testament, and in our common version is translated *hell*. The following are all the places wherein the word is found, Matt. 5c. 22-29-30v., and 18c. 9v., Matt. 10c. 28v., again, Matt. 23c. 15-33v., Mark 9c. 43-47v., Luke 12c. 55v., James 3c. 6v. To this fact, your attention ought to be directed, seeing that the word *hell* so frequently occurring in the Bible, may have led many to imagine that it invariably signifies a place of *future eternal punishment*. It is also worthy your attention, that the word *Gehenna*, or *hell*, is only used by our Lord, and by the apostle James. This fact you may easily satisfy your minds upon, by carefully reading the texts already quoted, wherein the word *Gehenna* occurs. Much then as this subject *hell* is dwelt upon, by preachers of the present day in their discourses, yet the inspired writers, strange as it may appear to us, are almost silent about the matter. John, though he wrote the history of our Lord, as did Matthew, Mark, and Luke, does not once name *Gehenna*. What is still more remarkable, Luke, though he mentions *Gehenna* in his gospel, does not name it in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, admitting him to be the writer of the Acts. Paul, Peter, and Jude, are also silent about *Gehenna*. No person in the New Testament, our Lord *excepted*, ever threatened men with the punishment of *Gehenna*, or *hell*, which is very strange if by *hell*, eternal misery be intended. There is another fact worthy your serious consideration, "that all that is said of *Gehenna*, was addressed to the *Jews* throughout the New Testament—*Gehenna* is not threatened to the Gentiles. This statement will be found to be correct, if any one will take the pains to read all the texts referred to, in which *Gehenna* occurs. In the eleven out of the twelve instances on record, in which *Gehenna* occurs in the New Testament, they were used in reference to the *Jews*. Is it not remarkable, that if a place of future endless punishment be in reserve for the wicked of all nations, for *Jews*, and for *Gentiles*, that the apostles of our Lord, when ministering to the *Gentiles*, should have



been *silent* on so awful a subject? Some theologians consider that Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their Gospels for the use of the Jews; be this as it may, it is evident, that John wrote his gospel for the use of the Gentiles, and yet in his gospel, he never mentions Gehenna? and if the punishment of *Gehenna* was for Gentiles and Jews, we respectfully ask, why did John omit to name it to the Gentiles? Surely if both were concerned in the punishment of *Gehenna*, both ought to have been warned against its dreadful consequences. After the observations which have been made, to prove that *Gehenna* does not signify a place of *endless misery*, it surely behoves us to consider carefully, all those passages with their contexts, wherein *Gehenna* does occur, that we may be enabled to decide in what sense the term *Gehenna* was used. The first passage is in Matt. 5c. 22v., “But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement, and whosoever shall say to his brother *Raca*, (*i. e.* empty and worthless fellow) shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say thou *fool*, (*i. e.* thou profligate rebel, or miscreant,) shall be in danger of hell, *Gehenna*, fire.” Now in this passage, three crimes and three punishments are named, the *judgement*, the *council*, and *hell fire*. And we think it will be allowed, that the two first of these punishments are of a temporal nature, confined to the present life. Why then should the third be extended to a future state, and to endless punishment? and can we believe, that if the crime of calling a brother, *Raca*, is deserving only of temporal punishment, that the crime of calling him a *fool* merits *eternal misery*? This is not probable, if punishment as we believe, will be ever regulated according to the *nature* and *degree* of the offence. “Every man shall be rewarded according to his works.” But what says Mr. Parkhurst on this text? “He says, a *Gehenna* of fire, does, I apprehend in its outward and *primary* sense, relate to that dreadful doom of being *burnt alive* in the *valley of Hinnom*.” Wherefore then did our Saviour

allude to this valley? evidently to warn his disciples against apostacy, which would involve them in the same calamities as those which were to befall the Jews; or wherefore did he point out to his disciples, the signs which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, if not to give his disciples suitable directions how to conduct themselves, so that they might avoid the awful calamities in which the Jews were to be involved, that they might not become profligate and *rebellious*. The other passages occur in the same chapter as the last noticed in the 29c. and 30v. "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," &c. Now what our Lord meant by a right eye, or by a right hand, was as the 28v. explains, their evil passions and propensities, which are as precious to men, as a right eye, or a right hand. And what our Lord meant was, that such passions and propensities, might not cause them to renounce their holy profession of his religion, and involve them in the same dreadful calamities with the rest of the Jewish nation. Accordingly Jesus said to his disciples, in Matt. 24c. 13v., "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." If it be asked, saved from what? it is replied, from all the temporal calamities, foretold by our Lord, which were to come on that generation; (See M'Knight in a note on Matt. 24c.) The next passage to be considered, is in Matt. 10c. 28v., "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell, or *Gehenna*." We shall also quote the parallel text Luke 12c. 4-5v., in which the word *Gehenna* occurs, and consider them together. "And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more than they can do." "But I will forewarn you, whom ye shall fear, fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, *Gehenna*, yea, I say unto you, fear him." Now it will readily be seen, that these two texts relate to the same subject, consequently, the remarks made on one, will apply to both. By our Lord's using the phrase "my friends," it is evident, he was address-

sing his disciples, and alluding to those trying circumstances in which they would be placed. But here it may be asked if Gehenna does not mean a place of future misery for the wicked, why, it is said that the power of man, only extends to the killing of the body, but that after God hath killed the body, he hath power to cast into hell, or *Gehenna*." In reply to this question, we beg to observe the remarkable fact, that Luke, whose authority would be sufficient to establish the truth of any doctrine of the New Testament, is quite *silent* about the *soul*—he does not make that apparent distinction between soul and body which Matthew does. Dr. Campbell says in his first dissertation, that the distinction between soul and body in Matthew, is a Hebrew idiom, which is confirmed by the fact, that *Matthew* who is supposed to have written his gospel in Hebrew, and not Luke, uses the distinction. What Matthew expresses by the words, "to destroy both soul and body in hell," Luke expresses by the words, "hath power to cast into hell." Hence it is evident, that in this passage, the word *soul* is used *expletively*. In many passages, the term *soul*, means the body and soul—the whole man; for instance, Gen. 12c. 13v., 19c. 20v., Exo. 12c. 16v., Lev. 5c. 2v., 20c. 11v., Numb. 11c. 6v., 31c. 28v., Psalm 57, 4v., Matt. 7c. 25v., "take no thought for your *life*," Luke 12c. 23v., "The *life* is more than meat," Rom. 13c. 1v., and 1 Peter, 3c. 20v. And as *soul* is used *expletively*, so is *body*. See Rom. 6c. 6v., "that the *body* of sin may be destroyed," 7c. 4v., "ye are dead to the *law*, by the *body* of Christ," Col. 2c. 11v., "in putting off the *body* of the sins of the flesh." But we would further observe on these expressions, recorded by both Matthew and Luke, that our Saviour could not have intended them to be literally interpreted, because, to *kill the soul*, or to *destroy the soul*, intimates the *death* of the soul; and if by the word *soul*, our Saviour meant the *spiritual*, or *immortal* part of man, is not the doctrine of *annihilation*, at once established? And understanding *Gehenna*, or *hell*, to mean a place of *endless misery*, it



would follow, that the Saviour threatened his disciples with *annihilation* in *Gehenna*, in which notion, few we should hope believe. But if soul means the life, and *Gehenna* or *hell* means as it certainly does, the valley of *Hinnom*, and our Saviour's language be considered as a warning to the disciples against apostacy, then the meaning of the Saviour is evident, and the language he used to convey instruction to the disciples perfectly clear. Before we close our observations upon these passages, it may be well to notice, that God says he is *able* to destroy both soul and body in *hell*, and that he hath *power* to cast into *hell*, yet he does not say he *would do so*, from which we infer, that such words prove nothing certain about *eternal misery*, the doctrine being one of inference, and not positively taught by these passages. Mark 9c. 43-49v., is the next place in the New Testament worthy of your attention. "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off, it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell fire, that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; and if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall *never be quenched*; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire," &c. From this strong language, it is not surprising that the awful doctrine of eternal punishment should have been inferred, but if the words of the evangelist are carefully examined, we venture to think that they will powerfully corroborate the views we have advanced upon the passages already noticed. It surely must be allowed, that these words but slightly vary from those already quoted. In these verses we have the expression "to go into hell" once, and to be cast into hell twice, which are but a slight variation of the words quoted in a previous passage. Matt. 5c. 29v. and 30v. And it is also worthy of remark, that the phrase



*to enter into life*, is equivalent to the expression, “to enter into the kingdom of God.” What then do these expressions, found in Mark’s gospel mean, *to enter into life*, and *to enter into the kingdom of God*? When we compare the four gospels, we find that where Mark, Luke, and John, use the phrase, kingdom of God, Matthew uses the expression, or kingdom of heaven. To enter into the kingdom of heaven, or into the kingdom of God, does not always mean, as many have supposed, *to enter into the heavenly state*, but to enter into the kingdom, or reign of the Messiah; few will question this, who have read the New Testament attentively. For proof of this, turn to Matt. 18c. 3v., where Christ says, “Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Will it be asked, were not the disciples already in Christ’s kingdom? We answer no, for his kingdom was not yet come. John, as well as our Lord and his disciples, only preached his kingdom as at hand. It is well known that Christ’s kingdom or reign, did not properly commence until after his exaltation to the right hand of God. Our Lord’s words plainly imply, that his disciples were not in his kingdom, nor could they afterwards enter it, unless they were converted. Dr. Campbell on this text says, “they must lay aside their ambition, and wordly pursuits, before they be honoured to be the members, much more the ministers of that new establishment, or kingdom he was about to erect.” To enter into life, or into the kingdom of God, is in the passage under consideration, *contrasted* with going into, or being cast into *hell*; but as the former does not mean to enter into the place of the righteous, but into Christ’s kingdom or reign, in *this world*, so the latter cannot mean to be cast into a place of endless misery, but to suffer the punishment of which we have seen, *Gehenna*, the emblem. Understanding our Lord’s words in this sense, they were pertinent, and peculiarly suited to the circumstances of his disciples. It was better or profitable for them, to enter into his kingdom, with the loss of every thing dear to them,

rather than, retaining wordly comforts, and temporal advantages, with these to suffer the dreadful calamities foretold by *Jeremiah*, and described by our Lord, in Matt. 24c., which should befall the Jews. At the destruction of Jerusalem, the unbelieving Jews were to suffer the damnation of hell, and at this awful period, all those disciples who endured to the end, who should then be found Christ's true disciples, were not only to be saved from this punishment, but were to enter into his kingdom; and the apostles were to sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But such of his disciples as did not cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye—who did not make sacrifices of a wordly nature for his gospel, would share in those calamities, or suffer the punishment, of which *Gehenna* was an emblem. Whitby on Luke, 21c. 34-36v. writes, "Here our Saviour calls upon the believing Christians, to take care and use the greatest vigilance, that they do not miscarry in this dreadful season, by reason of that excess and luxury which may render them unmindful of it, or those cares which may render them unwilling to part with their temporal concerns, lest they should be involved in that ruin which would come on others as a snare suddenly, and that they should add to this vigilance, constant prayer to God, that they may be found worthy to escape these tremendous judgements, and might stand safely, and boldly before the son of man, when he comes to execute them on the unbelieving Jews." This quotation, not only agrees with the preceding texts, but satisfactorily accounts for the Saviour's saying so much about *hell*, or *Gehenna*, and so little about it to the unbelieving Jews. And it also accounts for the fact, which cannot be accounted for on the common notion of hell, viz., that not a word is said concerning it to the Gentiles. But if the punishment of hell be the temporal vengeance which befell the Jewish nation, all is plain, rational, and consistent. We will now consider the phrase *everlasting fire*, and *the fire that shall never be quenched*, where *their worm dieth not*. This is said of *hell*, or *Gehenna*.

Parkhurst says, on the word Gehenna, "our Lord seems to allude to the worms which continually preyed on the dead carcasses that were cast into the valley of Hinnom, and to the *perpetual fire* there kept up to consume them." It is evident our Lord, in Mark 9c., quotes the language of Isaiah 66c. 24v., where the prophet says, "and they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall *not die*, neither shall their fire *be quenched*, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Here we think is found a satisfactory explanation given to our Lord's words. Now we ask, did Isaiah mean a place of endless misery, when he said, "for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched?" Was the prophet so understood when he uttered these words? Did the Jews so understand them when they read the prophecy? And did our Lord's disciples so understand the prophecy when they read it? Can these questions be with truth answered affirmatively? Surely not; why then should these words be made to mean a place of future endless misery, when our Saviour quotes them? If Isaiah used the words to mean *temporal calamities*, why should our Lord, when he quotes them, be said to mean future eternal punishments? and why should the prophet and our Lord, have two such different meanings to the same words? It is evident, our Lord did not explain them in any *new sense* to his disciples, nor ever intimated to his disciples, that he used them to signify eternal punishment. These are but a few of those reasons for believing that our Lord, when he spoke of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that shall never be quenched, did not use such language, to prove that the wicked in a future state, should endure eternal burnings. If his words are to be understood literally, we then must believe, that there is an endless place of punishment, *material fire*, in which there are *also worms*. But we presume, no one ever believed that there were worms in the place called *hell*, or in eternal fire; and if Gehenna signifies a place of endless



misery, it teaches literal fire, and literal worms, on the same authority. Here let it be understood, we do not presume to doubt the power of omnipotence to make an eternal fire, or a peculiar kind of worms to exist in such eternal burnings, but this ought never to be taught without the most express warrant of the Scriptures. As it respects the phrase *everlasting*, or *perpetual* fire, it cannot be shown from the Scriptures themselves, that endless duration is not meant. For proof of this, in Isaiah 1c. 31v., we read of a fire that shall not be quenched, night nor day, &c. Now are the Jews ever threatened with *everlasting fire*, or with a fire that shall not be quenched—they are, but this fire refers to temporal punishments. See Jer. 7c. 20v. Jer. 17c. 27v. “then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, *i. e. Jerusalem*, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.” See Jer. 4c. 4v., 21c. 12v. and Ezek. 20c. 47-49v., In Isaiah 33c. 14v. we read, who among us shall dwell with devouring fire. Who among us shall dwell with *everlasting burnings*, which words are frequently quoted to prove the everlasting duration of future punishment: but in opposition to the *scope* of the context, which will convince any one whose eyes are not wilfully closed to facts, that it refers to temporal punishment. The word *fire*, it is well known, is a figure used in Scripture, to describe the temporal punishment which befell the Jews, at the destruction of their city and temple; and so also is the phrase *everlasting burnings* in this prophecy. That both phrases referred to the same period, we think the following passages of the same prophecy fully prove; Isaiah 33c. 11-12-18-19v., and it does also appear, that from the 20v. to the end of this chapter, the peace and prosperity of the *Christian Church* is described. Surely enough has been said to show that the Saviour’s language in Mark, 9c., does not teach the doctrine of endless punishment in a future state. But it may be asked, how is it that this punishment of the Jews, of a temporal nature, is described as *perpetual*—as *everlasting fire*—and fire that



never shall be quenched. To which we reply, that those who have examined the Scriptures, know that *olm*, of the Hebrew, *æon* and *æonion* of the Greek, are often used to express *limited* duration. This might be proved by a variety of examples, but the following we hope will suffice: Exodus 40c. 15v., Numb. 25c. 13v., Lev. 16c. 34v., Deut. 15c. 17v., and Jer. 23c. 39-40v., which last authority we beg leave to quote, “And I will bring an *everlasting* reproach upon you, and a *perpetual* shame which shall not be forgotten.” This passage affords no room for debate. It is evident that the temporal calamities of the Jews is called *everlasting*, and described under the figure of fire; and they are certainly an example to all nations of the awful effects of rejecting the Saviour, and persisting in unbelief. The last passage to be considered is found in James 3c. 6v., “And the tongue is a fire—a world of iniquity—so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell.” This text cannot be understood literally; it will be difficult to understand how the tongue could be set on fire from a place of endless future misery, or from *Hinnom*. It is evident that James, in speaking of the evils arising from an improper use of the tongue, compares it to a world of iniquity, to use the language of Dr. Benson, *vide* note on James 3c. 6v., “A large collection of any thing, is spoken of in phrases of this kind, a world of riches, a sea of troubles, an ocean of delights; and Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*, speaks of an *universe of death*, and a *world of woe*. Being set on fire of hell, says Dr. Benson, the apostle says of the tongue what the poets have said concerning wicked men being agitated by the torches of the furies.” But the language of the apostle James was, remember, addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, see chap. 1, and compare it with the 3c. and 6v., and cannot be supposed to apply to the Gentiles. And it is an indisputable fact, that the apostles of Christ in their ministrations to the Gentiles, never spoke of the damnation of hell, which shews that the condemnation of hell

peculiarly concerned the Jews. This fact, which we deem of great importance in this enquiry, may be placed beyond all doubt by any who will take the trouble to read the writings of the apostles carefully. It should be recollected that James was a Jew, and that he wrote to believing Jews, "No place to a Jew, could afford such a view of perfect wretchedness as the valley of Hinnom or Gehenna." And it is reasonable to believe, that the apostle James, when pointing out to the twelve the vices arising from an improper use of the tongue, compared them to the filthiness and abominations of the valley of Hinnom. In conclusion, we beg to say, that having bestowed some attention on the passages of Scripture wherein the word Gehenna occurs, we cannot from these collect the least evidence for the doctrine of eternal punishment. Yet let no person imagine that Unitarians deny the doctrine of *future* punishment. Whoever does this, has fallen into a very great error. Unitarians, as well as other Christian denominations, are sensibly alive to the fact, that to the impenitent and obdurate sinner, in the midst of Christian light and knowledge—with clear conceptions of his duty, and strong convictions of obligations to obey it—who has lived, and continues to live, without God in the world—who has violated the laws of morality, and spurned the precepts of religion—outraged the best affections of the heart, and trampled on the dearest interests of mankind—to such a character, a day is fast approaching, which shall be full of awful retribution. Although Unitarians delight to dwell on that benignity which constitutes the essence of the divine nature, yet they do not cease to urge upon each other's attention, the solemn fact, "that every man shall be rewarded according to his works." They know as well as other Christians, "that God will not be mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap." Unitarians know, that independently of the Scriptures, sin and misery, sorrow and compunction of soul, are connected together "by a law, as steady and invariable in its operation as that which regulates the movements of the

planets." They know that for any to die without having acquired virtuous habits and pious dispositions—with hearts attached to criminal pleasures—that such persons will have their reward. My friends, the Scriptures are sufficiently explicit on this subject, and with deep and impressive solemnity they assure us, that after death cometh the judgment; that all mankind must appear before the tribunal of Christ, and that they must be judged according to the deeds done in the body. But how long the wicked may suffer—how long they will be excluded from the blessedness of heaven, it is presumptuous in frail and finite man to say. Judging from the general tenor of the Scriptures, we infer that future punishment will be corrective, and not destructive; and that we have no authority from them either to limit the justice or the mercy of God. Were we to believe in the doctrine of endless torments, we could neither contemplate the present life with complacency, nor the future with delight. But with our present views of God's intentions respecting mankind—that punishments hereafter shall be *corrective* and not *destructive*—we are enabled to meet adversity with resignation, and to enjoy prosperity with a clear chastened joy; and shall have something to sustain us when old companions, dear relatives, and kind friends, are falling around us.

## LECTURE VIII.

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### THE MEDIATORIAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

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1 *Timothy, ii. 5.*

FOR THERE IS ONE GOD AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN  
GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

IN this affectionate epistle of the good apostle Paul to his young friend and convert, Timothy, is imparted some very useful information, concerning the *duties* of the Christian minister. The apostle appears to be anxious to guard Timothy against suffering his mind to be disturbed with the genealogies and curious fictions of the Gnostics, which were anything but fruitful of edification, and only calculated to produce endless questions among the Christian converts. He earnestly recommends Timothy to exhibit, in his pastoral addresses and behaviour, the grand design of christianity, which is, to promote love and charity amongst all men—to shun those who were addicted to vain conversation—who presumptuously attempted to teach the law of which they were completely ignorant. He then expressly informs Timothy by whose authority he taught the Gospel, and dwells with peculiar delight, on the honor conferred upon him in his appointment to the work of the Christian ministry, who had once blasphemed the founder of christianity himself, and persecuted his disciples. What a difference is here discernible between the apostle, as a Christian teacher, and the champion of Judaism—as Saul of Tarsus, and Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ—as the pupil of Gamaliel, and the disciple of Jesus! And how powerfully does the conduct of Paul, when he became the zealous teacher, and defender of christianity, plead the cause of charity. Yes, my fellow



Christians, whatever be our private views of religion, and however erroneous we may consider those of other Christian professors which are not in accordance with our own, yet, let us exercise charity towards all men, and in no instance, whilst exposing what we believe to be error, and maintaining what appears to be the truth, injure our good cause, or wound the feelings of others, by presumptuous anathemas—by unlovely aspersions—or by cherishing in our bosoms, for one moment, a persecuting spirit. These are not the weapons of warfare which the great captain of salvation has authorized his faithful soldiers to wield in the defence of truth and righteousness. To see the folly of a persecuting dogmatical spirit amongst religious professors, look at the frantic rage of Saul of Tarsus, whilst engaged in persecuting the Christians, and then view his deep sorrow—his bitter self-reproaches, when afterwards he became one of the ablest advocates of that *cause he once so despised*. He thought he was doing God service in harassing and tormenting the Christians, a feeling this, which originated in his entire ignorance of the truth and value of the Christian doctrines. It is to be feared, the simple, but scriptural tenets of Unitarians, have, from a similar cause, been aspersed and charged as heretical and dangerous; but we feel satisfied, that as time, the great corrector of all abuses, rolls on—as education and mind advance, and Unitarianism becomes the subject of serious investigation, it will be acknowledged and cherished as the faith which was once delivered to the saints. The apostle after describing the wonderful change which had been wrought in his own faith and conduct, and his appointment “to the ministry of the new covenant, ascribes all results to the original and only cause of all things, unto the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God.” It is this glorious doctrine of *the divine unity* which the apostle sets forth in the words of our text, on which, with your leave, we will make a few observations. The doctrine of the divine unity must necessarily be admitted, before we can understand the sense in which the man Christ Jesus acts as mediator

between God and men. Surely if the sacred Scriptures are explicit upon any doctrines, they are upon the divine unity, and the supremacy of the Father, to our Lord Jesus Christ. The great basis of all religion is the belief in a God, or the admission of the important truth, that there exists a power equal to the production of this world, and of all other systems which make up the universe as a whole. The Scriptures teach that God is a spirit, not confined to time or space, "nor to be likened to anything in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath." That as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we know not the sound whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, that so is the spirit of God, *i. e.* that in a similar imperceptible manner, the creative power and sustaining energy of God operates. Hence then for finite understandings to attempt to comprehend the nature and essence of God, is surely presumptuous, being a subject too elevated for human comprehension, and too deep to be fathomed by the plummet line of human understanding. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is high, we cannot attain unto it." But incomprehensible to us as the nature and essence of God does appear to be, yet he has not left himself without witness, in the works which he has made: from these we are capable of inferring both his power and eternal godhead. The heavens alone do not declare his glory, nor the firmament his handy works, magnificent as these unquestionably are, because we think that our own frames, and the constitution of our own minds, furnish also abundant arguments that God is, and that he is infinitely wise, and impartially benevolent. Besides, there is also the strongest evidence of an universally presiding providence apparent in the events which happen to human beings, and in making these conduce to their greatest happiness and improvement. This delightful truth every one must admit who has paid sufficient attention to the history of mankind. Let us look as far back into the history of man as we can, and we shall not be able to resist the evidences which will arise to our minds from such a survey in favour of a Divine

Providence. The moral government of the supreme Being is apparent in the *adaptation* of the wisest laws for the guidance of mankind in their infant state of knowledge: and how admirably, as they advanced in knowledge, did he prepare for them new subjects of study, and new lights to guide them in further attainments of wisdom. This must be admitted by every one who will take the pains to compare the Patriarchal with the Mosaic—the Mosaic with the Prophetic, and the Prophetic with the Christian age. The admirable adaptation of Christianity to the increased moral wants of mankind, forms not only a strong evidence in favour of Christianity, but wonderfully illustrates the moral administration of the supreme and benevolent parent of the universe. It is worthy also of our observation, that as God condescended to employ human agency for the furtherance of his gracious designs respecting men in former times, so in his last and best dispensation, he has been pleased to send the man Christ Jesus into the world, to make known the terms of the gospel—to act as mediator between himself and all mankind. From these observations respecting God and his moral administration, we naturally infer his paternal character. “However separated men may be into tribes—however distinct may be their history, character, and manners—however they may be scattered over the face of the globe, or divided by interest or policy, and alienated by traditional enmity,” yet they have all one father, for God has made, of one blood, all the nations of the earth. It cannot but be lamented that this grand truth has been overlooked, and that men having lost sight of this fact, have paid those honors which are due only to this Universal Parent, to other beings beside. In all ages, men have been prone to idolatry; they have been fond of multiplying the objects of religious worship. Polytheism was universal among the Gentiles before the introduction of christianity. The praying to other beings, real or imaginary, besides the true God, was a prominent feature of the early corruptions of christianity; and when we consider the slow progress of the reformation and



its partial extent, it is not surprising that there should still exist amongst Christians, a tendency to worship God as a three-fold being. History however has proved that vice and profligacy, irreligion and impiety, have increased with the multiplication of objects of religious homage, which fact ought to warn Christians against falling into a similar error. Respecting ourselves, as a Christian body, suffer me to say, we ardently endeavour to avoid this error, and therefore we worship God as one uncompounded being—as the universal spirit that filleth all space, and not as a God, born of woman, or as constituted of emanations, influences, and somewhats. Beware then my friends, lest any rob you of this glorious truth, the spirituality and eternity of God, through vain philosophy and deceit, after the traditions of men, and after the rudiments of the world, for such would have you believe that God is a being constituted of manhood and godhead—of immortality and capable of dying upon the cross—of finity and infinity; he that fashioned the magnificent heavens, and rolled abroad their glorious and countless orbs of light—who modelled this beautiful earth, and cast forth the waters of the mighty sea! can he die?—he who peopled the earth with innumerable beings, infinitely diversified in structure—in powers and happiness, of whom the sacred Scriptures say, he is from everlasting to everlasting, the only proper object of religious adoration—can this being be proved to have expired on a cross? Be jealous then of this great and solemn truth, that God is immortal, immutable—who fainteth not, nor is weary—with a godly jealousy, as the only basis of true religion, and the only sufficient security for all virtue. “This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, for there is but one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” In connection with these words, how forcibly appear the words of the Almighty, “my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my way saith the Lord.” Would that mankind had always under-



stood this divine language, and not have imagined that these purposes of the Supreme, could be altered or changed by intercessors of their own appointment, or that he would alter his eternal purposes on the urgency of such solicitations. Then we should never have heard of churches being filled with the images of departed saints, placed therein to intercede with heaven's high King for their patrons and devotees. The simplicity of God's government, is the most dignified rebuke to the practices of those Christians who would crowd the access to the mercy seat by numerous mediators, to present palliatives for their follies: he however, to enable mankind to avoid this error, has wisely appointed one mediator to be the medium of his communications to them, and of their approaches to him: yes, there is but *one on* the throne, and there is but *one before* the throne—and when the humble suppliant would approach the throne of mercy, he knows and feels that there is but one being thereon to be addressed, and one mediator or medium through whom his address to that throne will find access. Hence there is no confusion in the mind of the worshipper, who bows before one object of worship, and directs his aspirations, the desires of his soul, to flow through one channel to the mercy seat on high. In accordance with this delightful doctrine, the apostle saith to Timothy, “for there is but one God—one supreme object of adoration, and one mediator—one channel of communication with the Father, the man Christ Jesus.” The title of mediator is given to our blessed Saviour *four times* in the New Testament. The word evidently imports in its literal interpretation, any one who mediates between two parties; and when applied to our Saviour, it refers to the appointment he received from heaven, to act as mediator between God and the children of men. Christ Jesus is then the medium of communication between God and men. Now it must be evident to every reflecting mind, that a mediator is not always requisite in the ordinary transactions of men, but only on occasions in which there may unhappily

exist amongst them, differences and dissensions. Hence the Scriptures more frequently apply the term *peace maker* to the Saviour, as the object of his mission was to reconcile men to God, not *God to men*—to lead them by both precept and example, to love the Lord their God—to obey his holy laws, and to be at peace with God. And in this sense we are to understand, that *God* was in Christ reconciling the *world* to himself. Hence we find it written, “It pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace by the blood of his cross, or having sealed the covenant of grace, mercy, and peace, by the shedding of his blood—by him to reconcile all things to himself.” But this is not the only sense in which the term *peace maker* is applied to our Saviour; it has a more extended signification; it implies that our Saviour is the medium of communication between God and men. This is the sense in which the term is understood in the New Testament. Thus, St. Paul, when speaking of the law, Gal. 3c. 19v., says, “it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” And in what sense *Moses* was the mediator of the law may be ascertained by his own language, Deut. 5c. 5v., “I stood *between* the Lord and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord.” Here *Moses* is evidently the mediator between the Deity and the children of Israel. In a similar sense the term is applied to Jesus by the apostle Paul, Heb. 8c. 6v., where Christ is styled the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises, than that of *Moses*. Now as *Moses* was mediator of the old covenant, or the delegated agent of the most High to communicate it to the people, so is Jesus called the mediator of the new and better covenant. This short definition of the term *mediator* will enable us to see the sense in which it is used in the sacred writings when applied to our Lord and Saviour: for in Heb. 12c. 24v., where the apostle is contrasting the mildness of the new, with the awful terrors of the old covenant, he speaks of Jesus as the mediator of the *new covenant* of love and mercy—as the agent employed to announce it to the world. Precisely

in the same way, the apostle's language is to be understood in Heb. 9c. 15v., where he speaks of the mediator as having *died*, that he might ratify the new covenant and render it obligatory or binding upon men, as all testaments, he adds, "are required to be ratified with blood." And it is worthy of remark, that although the shedding of blood was the ratification of the covenant, yet it is evident the ratifying deed was of a secondary consideration to the covenant itself. The true meaning of the title given to our Lord, in our text, is both plain and obvious. As the Deity was graciously pleased to hold intercourse with the children of men—to establish with them a covenant, in which he pledges to them *certain promises* on certain conditions, the agent employed to communicate this covenant to the human race was Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and men. The law came by Moses, who was mediator of the old covenant, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new and better covenant. And the children of men are to have access through the same means unto the Father; through Christ, their prayers and supplications are to be made to God. "I am the way saith Christ, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the father but by me." The office of mediator may then be viewed in two aspects, *the one* in which the mediator brings blessing down to men, and the other in which the offerings of men are borne upwards to the great object of worship—to the fountain of all mercy. In either view of this interesting fact, it is most consolatory to know, that our humble but sincere supplications to God, are borne in their upward flight, by him whose interest in the happiness of us mortals is untiring and unceasing—whose whole business it was, while on earth, to further the temporal and eternal interests of his fellow beings. To be sensible that we have in heaven an advocate with the father, one who knows our infirmities, and who is ever ready to convey to us the blessings for which we may have sought in prayer at our father's hands, is a delightful consideration. The mediation of Christ is not merely a doctrine of Scripture,



but is analogous to the whole economy of God's administrations. If we turn our attention to the visible government of God in the world, we shall perceive that it is carried on by the mediation of others—by secondary causes. “We find by experience, saith the profound Butler, that God does appoint mediators to be the instruments of good and evil to us, the instruments of his judgement and of his mercy.” As far as we can discern the ways of God towards mankind, it is evident that he rules his creatures, not by direct communications to them—not so much by visible tokens of his power, as by the agency of others. We are created, not by the direct influence of divine power upon a few particles of matter, but through the medium of parents; our very lives are not sustained by the immediate energy of our Creator, but by the means of food and exercise: our food it is evident, does not fall down upon our tables as did the manna of old, upon the sterile tracts of the desert, but is produced by the light and heat of the sun—by soft and refreshing showers—by the balmy air of the atmosphere, and by cultivating the soil on which we tread. Innumerable imperceptible agents are momentarily employed to promote his merciful designs towards the children of men. “When he would bless, he raises up human benefactors, and when he choseth to rebuke, he does not withhold his thunder and lightnings, his hurricanes and earthquakes. “If he sent Moses, Joshua, David and Cyrus, to bestow favours upon Israel, also punished them for their wickedness by the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and Romans.” And who can behold the beautiful analogy which exists between the natural and the moral world—between the settled methods of his providence, and the extraordinary operations of his grace, without wonder, love, and praise? as in the natural world, so in his spiritual kingdom, we behold his glory, not in a manner that would overpower our weak senses, but in the mercy of the Saviour's errand—in the mild influences of the gospel in the face of Jesus Christ, “all spiritual blessings in heavenly things, we receive through our Lord Jesus Christ; through him



came grace and truth—through him is the kindness of God toward us—through him cometh repentance and remission of sins—peace with God, and eternal life.” My friends, as every good and every perfect gift cometh down to us from heaven through secondary causes, so every spiritual good—every thing pertaining to truth and to godliness, the present and the future life, cometh to us through the mediation of our saviour, Jesus Christ. There is another interesting light in which he appears as our mediator. All the blessings of the gospel, all our privileges, which, as Christians we enjoy, come to us through our Lord Jesus Christ; and hence we see the propriety of all our services and sacrifices which comprehend our obedience and devotion to God, being presented to the Father *through* Christ. Our Lord directed the apostles to ask of God his blessings *in his name*, and the apostles consequently enjoined this important duty on the early Christian churches, to approach the Almighty in praise and prayer—in thanksgiving and confession, through Jesus Christ, *i. e.* in his name. And happy would it have been for the Christian cause, had all the professed disciples of Jesus in every age of his church, never lost sight of this Christian and apostolic command. Not content with offering their prayers and sacrifices through *Jesus Christ*, they have presumptuously, without the authority of Christ himself, and in the very face of all the evidences for the worship only of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the *invisible Jehovah*, bowed down to worship both the father and the son, affirming that the Son of God is God the *Father*, and consequently, the strange doctrine, that Christ was his own father: and, moreover, that not only the father and the son are identified, but that the *mediator* and the *mediated* are the same being—that in a word, *cause* and *effect* are precisely *one* and the *same thing*. There is, unquestionably, no accounting for the power of early prejudices, and the strong tendency of educational errors, to give a similar character to more matured thoughts—but such views of the supreme Being as those which we have now stated, appears to us as unreasonable as to say that an ocean is a river—that

land is water, and that mountains are plains. But it is evident that the prayers of believers ought to ascend to the eternal Father through Jesus Christ; that the disciples of Christ ought to approach the mercy seat of God, not in their own name, but in that of the mediator; that thus their hopes, fears, and desires, may be more favourably received in heaven. Here then is the marked difference between the Unitarian's mode of worship, and that of the Trinitarian's. We offer all our prayers to the God and father of mankind, *in* or *through* the name of Jesus, as the appointed mediator between God and men, whilst Trinitarians offer theirs through Jesus Christ, and *to him* as God and man. Let us then briefly enquire what is meant by praying through Christ, or in his name? We are not to suppose that mankind are prohibited from making any direct appeal to their heavenly parent—far from it. “Ye shall ask *me*, said the Saviour, nothing, but whatsoever ye shall ask the *father* in my name, he will give it you.” Who can misunderstand this language? who can believe that it teaches that the Saviour meant that he himself, as well as the father, were to be invoked in prayer? Does Jesus in the words just quoted, teach that he is both the object and the medium of prayer? *Impossible*, his words expressly state that the father is the object of the devout addresses of men. “Ye shall ask *me* nothing, but whatsoever ye shall ask the father, *in my name*, he will give it you.” What can be plainer? and what form of prayer to God, can Christians adopt more in accordance with all the precepts and examples of Scripture. In what sense then is this form of words *praying through Christ* to be understood? Most assuredly we are to address God by faith in Jesus Christ, as his disciples, who are influenced by those holy dispositions which the religion he taught and established enjoins upon us to cherish. To pray through Christ then, means through the directions he has given for acceptable prayer, and through the encouragement he has offered to sincere worshippers. And the expression “*in his name*,” means by the authority of Christ, “confiding in his warrant, commanded and invited

by him, as members of that family whom he has brought nigh unto God, and given access to the throne." That this is the general sense in which the expressions "*through Christ or in his name*" are to be understood, will appear by observing how they are used in other places of the sacred Scriptures. "The Levites went out to battle in the name of the Lord," *i. e.* by his authority—by faith in the power of God. "Then said David to the Philistines, thou comest to me with a sword and a spear and with a shield—but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou defiest." Here David meant that he approached the enemy with faith in the power of God, to enable him to overcome his enemy. The prophets spake in the name of the Lord, and our Saviour says "I am come in my father's name," *i. e.* plainly by the authority, or at the bidding of God his father. Again, "in his name shall the Gentiles trust," *i. e.* in his doctrine, in his authority as the Saviour of sinners. Luke also says "that remission of sins should be preached in his name," *i. e.* on his authority, the apostles were authorised to declare the forgiveness of sins on repentance and amendment. So they commanded the believers "to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus." And to pray in his name, is a duty they were commanded to perform, and must be understood in a similar manner to the other expression. It evidently means to pray by his instructions—by faith in Christ—and in the spirit of Jesus Christ. You must have observed whilst reading the sacred Scriptures, that they repeatedly use the name of a person for his doctrine or religion. For instance, Moses was said to be preached every Sabbath-day, which evidently means that the religion of Moses was taught every Sabbath-day? "We preach Christ and him crucified," said the apostle Paul. And in the Acts we read, they ceased not to preach Jesus Christ. "We preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ." We are said to put on Christ, to be in Christ—to profess Christ—all which phrases imply that the religion of Christ was preached and taught. And so must we understand the phrase "praying to God *through Christ*," since it is by the influen-



ces of his holy religion upon our minds—by his instructions, encouragements, and glorious promises, that we are enabled to worship God acceptably. Do not the instructions and example of our Saviour encourage us to approach the father, to ask for spiritual knowledge and comfort; hence then we are led to pray to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is approaching the Father in prayer, as the sincere but humble disciples of Jesus, that our prayers are to find acceptance with God. Let us not, my brethren, suppose that there is a talismanic influence or charm in using the name of Christ in our prayers; this will not avail in forwarding our petition to heaven unless we pray as the true disciples of Jesus! “Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven” says our master. And the apostle John says “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and *do* those things which are pleasing in his sight.” Prayers then whether offered to God in the name of Christ or without it, cannot avail with God, unless he sees they flow from souls that are in some measure prepared for so holy an employment, by the influences of his word. In this sense it is that the mediation of Christ opens the way of access to God—a doctrine full of encouragement to the humble and penitent sinner, and of awful admonition to the presumptuous and confident. From what we have advanced on the mediatorial office of Christ, surely you must have seen how manifold are the instructions, the aids, the invitations of a kind and merciful God, to lead men into the path of purity and of happiness, and how sadly do those Christians misrepresent the character of our omnipotent parent, who teach that he requires an infinite satisfaction for the sins of mankind ere he can reach forth to them the arms of his mercy. Can we look upon his love in raising up Jesus, and sending him into the world to bless mankind in turning every one of them from their iniquities, that thus he may effect their salvation, and then believe that an infinite price was paid to render him placable? But apart from these doctrines, we beseech of you



to observe how graciously the mediator toiled—how earnestly he intreated—how nobly he suffered, that the path of promise might not be hidden—that no prodigal who ever resolves to return to his father shall dread the step “for lack of a cheering voice and a helping hand.” Oh, how eminently is the gospel, a system of grace. It is true, alas, *too true*, that we are weak, ignorant and thoughtless. It is true, too true, that our very desires, pursuits and offerings are mean and trifling, and a serious consideration of these may oftentimes make us pause ere we venture to approach the heart-searching God in prayer. This reflection may lead us sometimes to hesitate whether we ought to presume to approach that Being who chargeth his angels with folly. But yet amidst all our doubts—in the midst of our hesitations and fears, it is consoling to know that there is one to offer us encouragement and hope, and to lead us trembling as we may, gently by the hand to seek pardon of God in the attitude of prayer at our father’s feet. Yes, we rejoice in the delightful fact, that we have an advocate, a mediator with the father, one who has himself shared our infirmities, and therefore pity them—who has himself borne our weakness, and endured temptations without sin—who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax. These observations we hope will suffice to illustrate the apostle’s position, “that there is one God, and one mediator” in which we believe, and hope to see universally prevail amongst Christians. That we are to approach the fountain of mercy through Jesus Christ, is also comprehended in the mediatorial office. This faith in Christ—this serious and affectionate remembrance of him, in all those duties by which we are instructed, to work out our own salvation, imparts a humility, a tenderness, and an evangelical spirit to character, it elevates even the ordinary virtues of life into deeds of Christian piety and discipleship. Oh! what a blessing is the gospel—how strange it is that mankind require to be urged, to embrace the privileges which it offers of communing with the most high—that the soul in its nearer approaches to God, may partake in some degree

of his purity. This gospel has been announced by the mediator, the saviour of men, and its tendency or influence in spiritualizing the soul, is admirably displayed in his life and death.

“Tis religion that speaks our morning bright,  
 Tis this that gilds the horrors of the night ;  
 When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few ;  
 When friends are faithless or when foes pursue.  
 Tis this that wards the blow or stills the smart,  
 Disarm’s affliction or repels its dart.  
 Within the breast bids purest rapture rise,  
 Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.  
 And when disease obstructs the lab’ring breath ;  
 When the heart sickens, and each pulse is death :  
 E’en then religion shall sustain the just,  
 Grace their last moments, nor desert their dust.”

## LECTURE IX.

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### NEW CREATION.

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*Ephesians iii. ix.*

WHO CREATED ALL THINGS BY JESUS CHRIST.

IT is essentially necessary in order thoroughly to understand the sacred writings, that their peculiar phraseology be carefully considered. In nothing pertaining to human knowledge are we so fully persuaded of as this, that inattention to any subject begets indifference to it, and in proportion as christianity is received as a matter of faith, independent of reason and investigation, so in the same, or nearly in the same proportion will it become a feeble and lifeless principle within us. Would any truth be generally useful to man, and consequently to society at large, merely because it is acknow-

ledged to be true? If when the matured fruit fell from the tree upon the head of the great Newton, he had rested satisfied that an apple, when ripe, would fall from the tree, without making any further enquiries into the cause of the fruit falling to the earth, should we now be in possession of those splendid facts which that philosopher discovered from a careful investigation of the *principle* that caused the apple to fall to the ground? So with the sacred writings, admitting their inspired character and truth, read them without the exercise of your reasoning *powers* if you can, for the *sake* of experiment, to allow faith to have its perfect influence, and what would such a perusal of those writings afford your minds as a substitute for the spiritual interpretations and historical illustrations which the use of reason when applied to their perusal affords. And suppose the great reformists when they commenced exposing what they deemed the errors of the church of Rome, had been actuated by the same motive which seems to pervade the minds of many religious professors in the present day, "that revelation being superior to reason, it is therefore to be received implicitly." Why the catholic clergy might have said to them, and very justly as you admit, that revelation is superior and independent of reason, why do you short-sighted and fallible men presume to exercise reason upon so mysterious a matter as religion? Had the reformers replied, because your doctrines are mysterious and unmeaning, the catholics might have silenced them with the following rejoinder; mysterious they may be, but unmeaning you have no authority to presume to determine; seeing according to your own showing, they are holy mysteries into which the human mind *must not* enquire. Now, had the reformers acted upon this principle, they would never have been distinguished in history as champions for the right of private judgement in matters of religion—as enemies to the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, or as those who caused the light of the reformation first to shine upon Europe. If it be said that religion is a mystery, then in what sense we ask can it be a



revelation? And for one moment look into this doctrine. God, we are told, sent religion to be our guide—that it contains his will, that we should obey it—but we humbly ask, how can we obey it if it be incomprehensible? The reply is, all that is necessary for salvation is so clearly revealed, that the wayfaring man can understand it. Then what more do we as Christians want? That which is mysterious let us lay aside, and be content with that which is plain. No more censure the humble Christian who is sincerely desirous of reaching, if possible, the happiness of heaven by the straightest, not by the most crooked—by the plainest not by the most complicated path. “Revelation and mystery are as opposite to each other as Christ and Anti-christ—light and darkness. Again, some assert that revelation is superior, but not opposed to reason. Are we to understand by this language that the gift of *reason*, which is admitted to be the noblest capacity of man, is not as precious in the estimation of the Divine Being, as the word which he has made known to us through chosen agents? If revelation has been sent as a means to an end—as an agent in the hand of omnipotence to promote our moral and mental improvement—does it not appear that reason is a faculty of the soul which is divine—which places man pre-eminently above all other beings in this lower world, and which revelation was sent to improve. And from this view of revelation, does it appear to be superior to reason? It would surely be more correct to say that reason is as necessary as revelation, and that both are essential to improve and perfect the mind. There are other persons who seem willing to exalt humility at the expense of reason—who deem it the duty of Christians to cultivate the spirit of self-abasement rather than the desire to improve their understanding; but surely it is not necessary to state that there can be no humility acceptable to God, that is not founded on its reasonableness. That humility which is not governed by the understanding, it is to be apprehended, may resolve itself into abject *fear*; and when it is based on fear and not on *love* and a sound mind, it can-



not be pleasing to Almighty God. The truly humble Christian is he who knows and feels his own weakness and wants—who is satisfied with the reasonableness and wisdom of the divine government, as it respects himself and the human race—who is ever ready to receive good at the hands of God as well as evil, knowing that all things under the management of infinite wisdom, is calculated to promote his present and future happiness, and the temporal and eternal welfare of all mankind. To hear some persons condemning us as a body of Christians for exercising our reason, on the all important concerns of religion, it might be imagined, that it was a heinous offence in the sight of God, to use the powers of our minds, to become as far as we can, thoroughly rooted and grounded in the knowledge of his gospel. But before they condemn us for so doing, they are in duty bound to show, that they do not reason on the solemn concerns of religion, and that Christians are not called upon “to *search* the Scriptures *daily*, and to try the spirits whether they be of God.” To prevent the use of reason in matters of religion, is surely the way to perpetuate superstition and religious error. It is an attempt to irrationalize man, which is not more futile than the attempt to unchristianize Unitarians for not believing all the doctrines of established theology. Let us then calmly enquire by the exercise of our reason, into this important question: who made the heavens and the earth—the sea and all things that are therein? For want of reason, has not the plain gospel been mystified, and made the innocent occasion of doubtless disputations, and discordant interpretations? And hence the necessity of considering a passage in all its connections, before we venture to conclude what is its precise meaning. Before we endeavour to ascertain the sense in which all things were created by Jesus Christ, it will be proper to ask, has the creation of the material world been ascribed to any other being besides our Saviour? we answer yes, the exercise of divine energy and skill in the creation of the natural world, is ascribed to Jehovah—the

God of Israel—the God and father of Jesus Christ. There are but few persons we should imagine, who will dispute the general language of the sacred Scriptures, as ascribing the creation of all things to the sole immediate power of God. “Thus saith the Lord,” in Isaiah 45c. “the holy one of Israel and his maker. I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens.” Again, the same prophet writes, “Thus saith Jehovah thy redeemer, and he that formed thee, I am Jehovah that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.” When the disciples of Jesus prayed for divine help, we read, “they lifted up their voices to God with one accord and said, Lord thou art God who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is,” Acts 4c. 24v. They speak also of Jesus Christ, but, as a being entirely distinct and inferior to God: thus, “for a truth against thy holy *child Jesus* whom thou hast annointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together.” And after speaking of the object which the Gospel contemplated to effect, they further pray “that signs and wonders may be done in the name of thy holy child Jesus.” Notwithstanding this, the apostle expressly affirms, that by Jesus Christ all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible. Hence then appears an inconsistency which the Scriptures are made to teach, which certainly for their sakes, and for our own satisfaction, should be if possible removed. On this important subject, there are cherished by Christians three interpretations or views. The first is, that Jesus Christ is Jehovah or God—that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God: hence say the advocates for this doctrine, the original creation of the world may be attributed to either, or to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Now this notion we feel justified in denouncing from the very language of Jesus. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matt. 27c. 46v. “I ascend to my God and your God.” John 20c. 17v.

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.” Rev. 3c. 12v. “I can of mine own self do nothing.” John 5c. 30v. “All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth.” Matt. 28c. 18v. “I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak.” John 12c. 49v. “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” John 17c. 22v. “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.” Luke 22c. 29v. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy *Son* also may glorify thee.” John 17c. 1v. “Why callest thou me good, there is none good but *one*, that is God.” Matt. 19c. 17v. The second interpretation of Scripture on this subject represents our Saviour, not as *truly God*, but as a being of super-angelic nature, who existed before all worlds, and was appointed by God to create the material world. Now this second interpretation, evidently avoids some of the difficulties attendant on the first, but appears to us exposed to other difficulties of nearly equal magnitude. For instance, although the Scriptures teach that the father is *alone* the true God, and Jesus Christ his agent in effecting the creation of the universe, yet, if our blessed Saviour was the creator of the heavens and the earth, and all things therein, how are we to understand what the Scriptures repeatedly affirm, that Jehovah created all things by his fiat, and alone. “God said let there be light, and there was light.” “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There is a third interpretation which appears more correct than the other two we have stated—that the material heavens and earth with their inhabitants, were created by Jehovah, *God, even the Father*—that all things were made by his unassisted power. And we trust to make it evident to you both from Scripture and reason, that the creation ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ, refers to that great moral change in the condition of mankind, which



embraced both Jews and Gentiles—a new state of things in men’s religious principles and conduct. There can be no doubt that the words *creation*, and *create*, are used in the Scriptures in a moral sense—not only describing spiritual changes in the state of mankind, but more particularly to describe the effects which the gospel of Jesus Christ produced. The phrase *creating* might probably have been used in allusion to the word as used in reference to the Mosaic account of the first creation. “*Creating all things*,” means to enlighten or to light all men, hence Moses said, “God said let there be light, and there was light.” “I create the fruit of the lips—peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near saith the Lord.” This prophecy describes a *creation* of precisely the same nature as that which a sincere belief in Jesus produces in the sinner, being restored to the peace of God. The same expressions the apostle applies to the Jews and Gentiles, when speaking of the new creation by Jesus Christ, “peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” In another passage of Isaiah when speaking as most Christians believe of the future age and dispensation of the gospel, Jehovah declares, “Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind, but be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create,” or as *Bishop Lowth* translates it, “ye shall rejoice and exult in the age to come which I create.” This language is borrowed from or written in imitation of that of the prophets, “and affords a scriptural key for understanding all those passages in the New Testament, which shew, that through Christ, all things have been created anew in heaven and in earth.” Neither can it be thought strange that the New Testament writers should employ such language as descriptive of the moral reformation effected by the gospel. Hence such phraseology is frequently used in a figurative and spiritual sense: St. Paul says, “We are his workmanship created in or by Christ Jesus, unto good works which God hath before



ordained that we should walk in them." Again he says, "be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Again, Epistle 2c. to Cor., he says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature—old things are passed away—behold all things are become new." Here then men are said to be created in Christ Jesus. But does this mean their mortal bodies? their frame or original existence? how are men made new creatures by Jesus? let the apostle answer the question, "by being created unto good works in righteousness and true holiness." Here the effects of the gospel are described as a new creation. Surely no candid Christian will object to this interpretation of the passages which speak of all things being created by Jesus Christ. Is it not in accordance with the language of Scripture? Those who differ from us in interpreting the creation ascribed to Jesus Christ, are bound to shew that there is some peculiarity in the disputed passages which requires them to be interpreted in some other sense than the new moral creation; "something which renders them useless, if not ascribed to the material creation." But let us examine some other passages which speak of a creation by Jesus Christ. We will turn to Col. 1c. 13-15v., "For by him all things were created that are in heaven and in earth, visible, and invisible—all things were created by him, and for him." Now why interpret this language of the apostle as implying the material creation, seeing that the apostle refers throughout the chapter, not to the creation of the world, but to Christian redemption—to moral reformation. Mark his language that precedes the verse just cited, "God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins—who is the *image* of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature," *i. e.* the head of the new creation, the first-born from the dead. This the apostle

explains by what follows, "because he is the head of the body—the church—the beginning—the first-born from the dead—that in all things he might have the preminence. For it pleased the father, that in him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace through the blood of his cross, *i. e.* having reconciled us to God by his death—by him to reconcile all things unto himself—by him I say whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." All this then relates to the efficacy of his gospel, to that glorious moral change which it was sent by the father to accomplish. Why suppose the apostle to allude in one part of this chapter to a *creation* which has no connection with that great change in the religious views, feelings and habits of mankind, which the gospel was sent to bring about. Now St. Paul not only says "all things were created by Jesus Christ," but that "all things were before *shut up* under sin," Gal. 3c. 22-23., "that they are now reconciled unto God." Col. 1c. 20-23v., and quickened and made alive by him. Now, if by *all things* the apostle meant all mankind, or as he elsewhere speaks, all flesh, (there shall no flesh be justified) *vide* Gal. 2c. 16v., or the great scriptural division of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, then they will be perfectly consistent with each other, and may be justly applied to one, and the same subject. "For as both Jews and Gentiles are created by Jesus Christ, so before this creation they were in the language of the apostle *shut up* under sin," but are now reconciled to God, and quickened or made alive by him, and subjected to Christ. But if we suppose St. Paul when he says all things were *created* by Christ—to mean the heavens and the earth and the sea—with what propriety can it be said of these things that they were once shut up under sin, have been since reconciled unto God and quickened by him, and are now placed under one head, and subjected unto Christ? Some of my hearers may probably still think that the terms heaven and earth refer to the material world, but mark the apostle's own language, "It pleased the father by him to reconcile all things to himself, whether they

be things in earth, or things in heaven." Again, he says, "God made known unto us the mystery of his will, that in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth." How delightful is this view of the gospel influences, that it has been sent to gather together Jews and Gentiles into *one assembly*: however formerly estranged from each other by national prejudices and pride, to acknowledge one master, even Christ, and one spiritual head. What a strange interpretation is that which would represent the mountains and valleys, the oceans and rivers, the trees and shrubs, the sun, moon, and stars, as reconciled to God, by the preaching of Jesus Christ. We will notice one passage more, and then conclude. St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews says, speaking of our Saviour, "by whom he *i. e.* *God made the worlds.*" But think you this relates to the material universe? Where have we authority for believing that the apostles understood by this a plurality of worlds? Does it not rather refer to the series of events in the dealings of God's providence? The expression, says an able divine relates, to the moral dispensations of God. From these remarks and enquiries, can we see the shadow of an argument in favour of the hypothesis, that Jesus Christ is God, and that by him were created the heavens and the earth? Do those passages to which we have referred, afford any proof that our Saviour was not himself a created being? The introduction of christianity into the world, effected greater changes in the condition and prospects of human beings, than anything besides in its whole history. It is impossible for us, educated as we have been from infancy, in the holy principles of christianity—whose minds have been more or less influenced by its cheering truths, to form anything like a correct notion of the mighty changes which it produced on the Jewish and heathen nations. Its solemn, comprehensive and luminous truths—its signs and wonders, or miracles, must have appeared to the astonished world, as



a new creation. Its light, its truths, its miracles were no sooner seen, than the face of things wore a new, a brighter, and a lovelier aspect. Its spirit no sooner moved upon the face of society, as did the spirit of God upon the waters in the first creation of the world, than order sprang from confusion, light from darkness, and truth from error. The heathen deities were dethroned, and the sceptre of that authority which they had swayed for ages, "over enslaved hearts" were thrown to the dust—their temples were deserted, and finally rased to their foundations. The Jewish hierarchy declined and perished, and their sacrifices to God, of bulls, and of goats, of oil, and of blood, became denounced as useless. No sooner did the Saviour appear, than idolators and sinners shook off their galling chains; superstition and prejudice began to vanish, truth immortal, light inextinguishable, and love universal, came to bless the world. Who cannot see that through the powerful working of the gospel, the world has been created anew in Jesus Christ? Before the light of christianity shone upon mankind, all things appeared to have had a commencement, but no end—there hung a dark and impenetrable gloom over the final history of man; the moral world appeared enveloped in ignorance, superstition, and delusion, "every heart slept in the coldness of impiety," and the soul was identified with the dust of the earth. But when the fulness of time came, God raised up Jesus Christ to be the honoured instrument in his hand, to enlighten and elevate the human mind, to reform the human race, to create an entirely new system of morals, and in this new creation, Jesus himself was made the first-born of every creature. And as Christians we are taught still to look for a new heaven and a new earth, in which shall dwell all righteousness. We are taught to look forward to the final renovation of all things by the Messiah. Let us then rejoice in the future, because it is God's and God's only, and as we approach the period of our dissolution, let us look beyond death and the grave with humble hope, to an eternity of increasing glory, of progressive wisdom, and endless happiness.



## LECTURE X.

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### THE WISDOM OF GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

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*Gal. iv. 4-5.*

WHEN THE FULNESS OF TIME WAS COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, MADE OF A WOMAN, MADE UNDER THE LAW, TO REDEEM THEM THAT WERE UNDER THE LAW, THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE ADOPTION OF SONS.

IT is not necessary to occupy your thoughts with the evidences of a supreme creator and ruler, to account for all the wonderful effects which every where strike the eye and the understanding. Addressing those who are satisfied of the existence of a cause, adequate to the production of all things visible, let it be called by whatever name men choose, there cannot be any impropriety in directing your thoughts to its operations in the moral world. Were we to attempt to enumerate the blessings we experience of a temporal nature as the indications of God and his providence, the task would be an endless one, for these we enjoy from infancy to old age. Suffer us then to speak of that moral administration of God which is so apparent, in having established rewards for virtue, and of punishments for vice. This government is perceptible, (though not in the degree that religion inculcates,) in the pleasurable sensations we experience in the performance of acts of benevolence, kindness, and justice, no less than in the vexation, solicitude, and remorse, which invariably, on reflection, accompany the commission of fraud, injustice and

oppression. The desire there is in mankind to reprobate and punish actions that are vicious and injurious to society—the sympathy which the good and virtuous in all ages have manifested for each others welfare—the regard in which the eminent in charity, temperance, and humanity, have ever been held, even by those who have not been conspicuous for the practice of such virtues—speak a language intelligible to the feeblest understanding, and point out the side to which nature evidently leans—while the fear of exposure and dread of punishment, which must corrode the happiness and destroy the tranquillity of mind of the guilty, is a silent, yet eloquent declaration against them; and not unfrequently operates as a more severe chastisement than any which human laws could have inflicted. By means like these, is the moral administration of God exemplified to his rational offspring; and as in this life, rewards and punishments are thus in no small degree assigned to virtue and vice, so, agreeably to the plan of moral administration on earth, is the method whereby the spiritual perfection of mankind shall be effected. As it was the business of natural religion to instruct mankind in the existence and moral government of the Deity, so it is the primary object of christianity to establish its divine authority on a sure foundation, without which its important advantages would in vain have been published to an incredulous world. The selection of a certain period of the world for the announcement of the Christian dispensation, so suited to an improved intellectual and moral state of man, is perfectly analogous to the plan whereby omnipotence instructed the human race from its earliest period. For it is evident that as one simple command constituted the Adamic covenant, so the various succeeding covenants made to the world, by the patriarchs, by Moses, and the prophets, increased in importance and were suited to the increased intelligence of mankind—these prepared the way for the announcement and reception of the new and better covenant brought unto the world by Jesus Christ. “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman,

made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons." That period in which the gospel appeared, must, we think, have been determined by the wisdom of God, as the best for its credibility and establishment. Such we think to have been the period when the Messiah appeared. It was preceded by a chain of predictions which rendered the Messiah an object of faith before his actual appearance, and demonstrated their circumstantial accomplishment. Had the publication of the gospel been postponed to a later period, it might have been asked with triumph "Why was the advent of the Messiah deferred so long? If the benefits of his mission are so great, why were they withheld from preceding generations, and confined to the latter ages of the world?" We will endeavour to discuss this question on its most material ground, and shew, by various reasons, that it affords no advantage to those who are doubtful of the credibility of gospel evidences. "There are two kinds of prophecies respecting Christ, such as of themselves separately, are evidences of more than human foresight; and such as in connection with others, form a system of predictions, which, while they reflect light on each other, exhibit their own origin to be from the fountain of light and knowledge." Now it is the union of those predictions throwing their combined light upon one point of the world's history, which renders the argument from prophecy, in favour of christianity, complete. If the evidence of either kind of prophecy were diminished, while the other remained entire, the proof would be so far imperfect. Now supposing our Saviour had appeared at an earlier period, admitting for a moment, that the more striking prophecies would have retained their full force, it must be allowed that the chain of proofs would have been considerably shortened—the connexion seriously interrupted—and their force absolutely diminished. The time and place of the Messiah's appearance—his character and family—his offices, and the purpose of his mission, could not have been ascertained beforehand with such evident marks of discrimina-

tion, nor could they have produced the same confidence they now afford, when each prediction is considered as connected, not only with that which precedes, but also with that which follows, though delivered by men, remote from each other in situation and times, and marked by every diversity of attainment and pursuit. But on this supposition, it is difficult to believe that the credibility of the most illustrious predictions, would have escaped the suspicion of many, respecting their truth. The more the time of their accomplishment was accelerated, the more reason there would have been to suspect fraud, artifice, and collusion; and this would have furnished the unbeliever with a pretence for affirming "that the prophecy was occasioned by the event, rather than that the event was the fulfilment of the prophecy." Thus one of the grandest arguments on which our hopes as Christians depend, would have been seriously weakened in all its parts, and in men of incredulous minds, its evidence would have been nearly invalidated. Then this evidence for Christianity, which in the estimation of all sound minds, approaches to demonstration, would have rested on no better foundation than did the oracles of superstition. The very miracles which accompanied the ministry of Christ, are proofs of the wisdom of God in waiting until the fulness of time had arrived before he sent the Saviour on his errand of love and mercy. Had christianity been introduced in the earliest ages of the world, when mankind, owing to their inexperience, were extremely credulous—when they were unable to examine the nature of evidence—when they could not distinguish between a prophecy, and the event to which it may have related—when they did not even suspect any intention to deceive, and were easily misled by appearances, then would there have been abundant room for suspicions relative to the truth of christianity. Besides, as the appearance of the Messiah was attested by miracles, had these been performed before a race of beings scarcely civilized, who, in this age of the world, could have



ventured to credit their accounts? Surely we should now view such accounts as having a common origin with the superstitions of Greece and Rome. The period for our Saviour's appearance fixed by omnipotence, was the best that could possibly have been selected—a period “when science had illumined the minds of men—when experience had rendered them cautious and inquisitive—a time when men could not only assign to every fact, its due degree of credibility, but when they were capable of reasoning on its importance, record it for general use, and transmit it with its accompanying attestations, to the examination of posterity.” Had the miracles of Christ been less public or less stupendous, or performed in a more ignorant or accommodating age, the Jews would have found an excellent opportunity for asserting at once the imposture of both Christ and his miracles. Instead of which, many were compelled to admit the reality of those miracles, and though some through prejudice, perverseness, and obstinacy ascribed them to the agency of evil spirits, yet this evasion surely amounts to an argument for the supernatural cause of such astonishing effects. Besides these advantages in point of evidence, the time of Christ's appearance was more favourable than any preceding period, to the propagation of his religion; because history informs us that “the Roman eagle had already fled in every direction of the world, and with it carried civilization—Rome had introduced through her conquests, the rudiments of her science and her love of knowledge—*she* had diffused a common language over the conquered provinces, and what is still more important, *she* had opened an easy communication and ready intercourse among nations before unknown to each other, from the banks of the Euphrates to the shores of the Atlantic, and from the Nile, to the Isles of Britain.” Accordingly, we find at Jerusalem, men of almost every language; we see the same apostles, almost at the same time, in the lesser Asia, in Greece, Italy, and Spain: we see infant churches every where rising, and christianity soon

after it, found its way into the human heart, speeding with the rapidity of the wind, to the extremities of the Roman empire. Yes, the gospel was wisely withheld until men could be made sensible of its value and tendency, and had fairly tested the importance of human reason. Whatever some may say in disparagement of reason, it is evident that infinite wisdom withheld christianity from the world, until men had learned the art of reasoning—until by this they could discern the nature and value of both Christ and christianity. If the latter ages of the world have cause to rejoice that the Saviour was not sent until the fulness of time was come, a few reflections will shew that former ages had no reason to complain. If they had no acquaintance with the purpose and the efficacy of his mission, they had at least every information which was suitable to their circumstances and capacities. How remarkably the state of the world resembles the condition of human life: who cannot perceive that it has its infancy, its maturity, and its old age: that it advances by slow but progressive steps, through the several gradations of knowledge and experience. And if we admire the wisdom of God in withholding from the human mind the advantages of science until discipline had unfolded, and time had strengthened its powers—if we admire the wisdom of God in appointing the light gradually to increase to meridian day, that its influence may not be too sudden and overpowering to our senses—so we must acknowledge the goodness and wisdom of providence, in gradually preparing of the human mind to be illuminated with the light of the sun of righteousness, in the same progressive order as the twilight of the morning increases imperceptibly to meridian splendour. Before we pass on to consider our texts more particularly, let us review the important events through which we have passed, and which have conducted us to that period, emphatically styled, “the fulness of time.” “The ages of ignorance and fable had elapsed—the revolutions of governments had begun to acquire stability, and had been transmitted to the page of the historian—science and commerce were ex-

tended from the capital to the distant cities of the empire." A common language as we have seen, had blended almost into one people, the several nations who were comprised under the Roman government. Judea had also assumed the appellation of a Roman province. A peace, as universal as it was extraordinary, had given the world time for reflection, and general expectation was on the watch, to catch the first appearance of the Messiah. And whilst the would-be-thought wise were making their calculations as to the period of his arrival on earth, and others were probably dreaming of "opening heavens and falling stars," as indications of his entry into the world, behold in the fulness of time he came, not however with noise—not with parade—and not from the heavens—but made of a woman, and born in a manger. Having, we trust, adduced some evidence to shew that the deity selected the most favourable period in the history of mankind, for sending his chosen son into the world, that by his preaching and holy life—by his death and glorious resurrection, we and all those who believe in his holy mission, may be redeemed from sin—may receive the adoption of sons, and may, by having the spirit of Christ in our hearts, cry out Abba, Father. Allow us next to point out an important feature in our text, "God sent forth his *Son*, (not himself observe) *born of a woman*." Here the apostle affirms, that the Almighty gave a commission to Jesus, the Son of Joseph and *Mary*, a Jewish family, and subject to the law of Moses. Now if this was the only passage in the New Testament, which spoke of our Saviour's human nature, we could not for one moment presume to say, in the very face of the apostle's affirmation, that nevertheless, he was the supreme God, particularly, when the Scriptures assert further, that he was a man approved of God. My friends, however erroneous some Christians may deem our views of Jesus Christ, and however these may have been misrepresented, yet we are prepared to shew, that when the Unitarian teaches that Jesus Christ is the *son of man by nature*, and the Son of God, by the choice of the supreme Father—that he has not



taught a doctrine of mere human inference, but a doctrine which is conveyed by the very language of Jesus Christ, and his apostles. In maintaining this view of the Saviour, surely he has no right to incur the displeasure and suffer the reproach of those who entertain different notions on this important subject. Be this as it may, the honest minded Christian will never suffer the opinions of the many to deter him from maintaining his religious convictions, be they Unitarian or Trinitarian. He will sacrifice on no altar but truth, and then the sacrifice must be the homage of a convinced judgement—not a degrading peace-offering to public clamour—to popular superstition—or to sectarian bigotry. But we will now endeavour to shew from sacred Scripture, that the Unitarian teaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, when he declares that Jesus Christ is the *Son* of the living God. “God sent forth his *Son* made of a woman.” A phrase amongst the Jews always expressive of a proper human origin. How does this accord with other scriptural language concerning Christ? “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose *father and mother* we know? Is not this Joseph’s son? Is not this the carpenter’s son? And now compare this with the language of prophecy, Isaiah 53c. “He is despised and rejected of men—a *man* of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Jeremiah speaks of him as a “righteous branch.” “Behold the days come saith the Lord that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice on the earth.” In Ezekiel, the Messiah is described by the *patronymic* of his royal progenitor. “I will set up one shepherd over *them* (the Israelites,) and he shall feed them, even my servant David.” Again, “my servant David shall be their prince for ever.” But now let us turn our thoughts for a moment, to the sermon of the apostle Peter, recorded in Acts 2c., commencing at the 22v. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus



of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know : him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain : whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Are we not then wise above what is written, if we maintain any hypothesis respecting the nature and person of Christ, which is irreconcilable with this language of holy writ? Here we not only see the scriptural authority for believing in Jesus as the "son of man," and chosen son of God, but also the force of the apostle's words in our text, "God sent forth *his son* made of woman." Let us now consider how he was born, or made under the law? This refers to the state of subjection and servitude of the law of Moses, which was deemed by the Jews themselves, a grievous bondage. And probably the apostle may refer to the binding nature of the law. However, in God's own time, fixed in his unsearchable counsels, he expressly raised up from among his brethren, a prophet like unto Moses, born of woman, whom the father honoured by the title, *first-born son of God*, and commissioned with power to release all who were under subjection to the Mosaic law : this great deliverer, having himself been chosen from the Jewish nation, and having lived in subjection to its law, "He by his death, put an end to the legal dispensation, introducing and ratifying a new and better covenant;" so that Jews and Gentiles are now alike, free from the tyranny of the law, and are equally entitled by faith to the privileges of the gospel. Let us consider in the last place, the grand object or design of the Father in sending his Son into the world, that we might *receive the adoption of sons i. e.*, that we and all who believe in the gospel, which the son was sent into the world to teach and establish, may stand in the relative situation of sons and daughters to God. If,

my friends, the gospel was to the Jews, a release from the law of Moses, by them considered so oppressive, how must it appear to us, sent as it is, to purify our minds—to elevate our thoughts—to deprive sin of its power, and death of its terrors. Let us rejoice in the gift of Jesus Christ, and in his *blessed gospel*, “which is the power of God unto salvation.” Let us as Christians walk worthy of our vocation, by living as much as we are able, blamelessly and harmlessly in the world. Though we cannot prevent men from censuring our faith, what of this? is it the less the faith once delivered to the saints? Though by some we are denied the name of Christians—what of this? we know in whom we believe, even in Jesus of Nazareth, the anointed son of God, who died to confirm his gospel, and our hope in eternal life, and who is appointed by the father, to be judge of the quick and dead. We may be persecuted by men for our religious opinions, but what of this “let us stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by our adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to us of salvation and that of God. “For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” My friends, after the illustrious example of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world—who was meek and lowly in heart, let us unite the harmlessness of the dove with the meekness and innocence of the lamb; carefully avoiding to do injury to any one as becomes the *sons of God*, who are advanced to the highest dignity, and who possess the most glorious inheritance. In the midst of a crooked generation, who discover on all occasions the perversity of *their judgements, inclinations, and actions*, “Among whom let us shine as lights of the world,” manifesting our celestial origin—our *superior excellence*; and by our unsullied purity of manners, shed a benign influence on all around us. Holding forth the word of life, may we exhibit in every condition through which we may pass, an

amiable transcript of its holy precepts, and display their sanctifying power upon us—by activity in the duties of obedience—by patience under all our afflictions—by fortitude to resist all temptations to sin—by dependance on God’s gracious promises of eternal life, and by a calm surrender of our souls and bodies to the messenger of death. The gospel opens the most glorious prospect to all who believe and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, who has solemnly affirmed, “that he that heareth his word, and believeth on him that sent him, hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation.” The Saviour has not only taught us our duty to God and man, and left us holy precepts to be our guides through life—he has not only taught us how to live and die, but he has thrown the light of his holy gospel into the tomb—he has robbed the grave of its victory—he has taken the sting from death, by bringing to light a life of eternal joy. Blessed Saviour, thou hast taught us to rejoice in crumbling nature—to smile through the tears of sympathy that we may shed over the ashes of departed friends. To stand and see the grave close upon them with the dignity, calmness, and confidence of those “who watch the setting sun, and say, to-morrow thou shall rise again,” or to sing with the poet,

Beyond the bounds of time and space,

Look forward to that heavenly place,

The saints secure abode,

On faith’s strong eagle pinions rise,

And force your passage to the skies,

And scale the mount of God.

Let this religion of Jesus be duly appreciated by us; oh! may it have its full power over our hearts and lives; and then it will sustain and strengthen the “bruised reed of human weakness, and fan the rising flame of holy purposes;” then will it revive our failing courage, and restrain our wayward passions. Thanks to a merciful parent, his holy religion has been sent to check us in our wild career of folly—to exert a more abiding and rational influence upon all we

do and say. It has been sent to remould the very energies of our nature, and to fashion us into the likeness of our heavenly master. May we find the real and gracious power of this religion, and may it lead us in the true, the firm, the brightening path of the just, till it brings us in God's own time, to their perfect rest.

## LECTURE XI.

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### ON CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION.

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*Ephes. i. 7.*

IN WHOM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD,  
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, ACCORDING TO THE  
RICHES OF HIS GRACE.

IN the commencement of this epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul, after naming his apostleship, makes a direct and solemn appeal to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the children of men have received their spiritual blessings. It is impossible for inspired language to convey more fully our own sentiments respecting the Father and the Son, the *source and the medium* of all our religious blessings, than the following, which the good apostle used in his letter to the Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ—according as he "*i. e. God*" hath chosen us in him, *i. e. Christ* "before the foundation of the world." How admirably this language illus-



trates the manner in which Christ and his true disciples may both be said to have pre-existed before the foundation of the world—"that we," continues the apostle, "should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." If there be an apostle's creed, we think this must be it. The apostle expressly asserts that God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fundamental article in the apostle's creed, shines throughout his epistles, so that it is plain St. Paul believed the *Father* of Jesus Christ to be the *God* of Christ. Most of his epistles commence with this article; for instance, after the language which has been already quoted from the first 12 verses of the 1 chapter of Ephesians, we read in the same chapter, in the 17v., "*The God of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore;" in 2 Cor. 11c. 31v., and in Gal. 1c. 1v., we read "and God the Father who raised him" *i. e.* "Christ from the dead;" and in St. Peter 1st epistle 1c. 3v., his words are the same, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:" and to the God of our blessed Saviour did the apostle present his prayers, see Romans 1c. 8v., "First I thank my God through Jesus Christ, for you all." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all consolation," as the apostle expresses himself in 2 Cor. 1c. 3v., and in Collosians 1c. 3v. "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, and of the love which ye have to all the saints." And to God did the twenty-four elders in 11c. 16v. of Rev. pray. And the four-and-twenty elders who sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God,

saying, " We give thee thanks O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come." And to God the Father, did the Saviour himself address his prayers, and taught his disciples to offer theirs also. We then are justified in offering our thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the glorious covenant of grace. My friends, the sole ultimate design of our father in sending us into the present world, is to prepare our minds for another and a better state of being. To hasten this wished for period, the Saviour has been raised up, and anointed by the God and Father of all, and sent by him into the world as the preacher of righteousness, and the exemplar of virtue. This important mission to which the Saviour was appointed, *and its merciful object*, are called, the work of *reconciliation, regeneration, salvation, and redemption*. Now these terms are synonymous with each other and are used by the apostles according to their individual notions of the great work of salvation. To the man who will steadily look upon the object of the new dispensation—to the man who will venture to view the grand design of religion with his own eyes, he must admit that its chief design is to prove the resurrection of the dead, and a future state of rewards and punishments—a condition in which virtue shall be *exalted, glorified, and perpetuated* throughout eternal ages—a state in which vice shall be eternally blotted out from memory; and when death, the consequences of sin shall be no more experienced. This is what we require to know respecting the *design of God* in raising up Jesus Christ, and sending him into the world to be its Saviour and Redeemer—to render the Father an object of eternal *praise and gratitude*, and religion, man's highest interest and happiness. The value and importance of christianity will appear great indeed, if when its cheering light first burst upon the world, we look at its moral condition. On the first publication of christianity, the genius of *polytheism* had nearly extinguished the flame of true devotion. It provided no method for enlightening the public

mind—it convened no assemblies for the adoration of the true God—“it considered external forms as a commutation for crimes, and encouraged the most flagrant acts of obscenity.” The Jews also themselves had found their law to be a yoke of bondage, and their utter neglect of its precepts, constituted their transgression. To them the law became a ministration of condemnation and death; this subjected the Jews to its curse. Moreover the law and the prophets being perverted by the traditions of the elders, the people soon became immersed in moral depravity. It cannot be a matter of astonishment, that darkness had covered the world, and gross darkness the people, when the light of truth was nearly extinguished in Judea—when the Jews themselves, the boasted guardians of truth, and who prided themselves in their civil and religious distinctions, were morally depraved. This however was the fact, as sacred and profane history fully prove. From this view of the moral world, we shall not require to ask, was a Saviour necessary—one who should deliver it from sin and death. As death universally reigned, being the established law of nature, and as descendants of Adam, or in other words as human beings, who have all sinned, and all must die; the *covenant of grace* made known to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, which is intended to redeem us from all iniquity, and to prepare us for a better inheritance than the present, beyond the grave. This dispensation must appear as the strongest manifestation of God’s love towards mankind; and the person who was divinely authorized to proclaim and certify redemption from death and the grave, must have appeared to our forefathers, as he does to us; and as he must appear to the latest posterity of Adam, an object of wonder, love, and praise. Perhaps we in this age, form inadequate conceptions of the value of this dispensation, having been educated in its principles, and continually enjoying its cheering light; we are, it is to be feared, too liable to regard our present privileges as Christians, in the same manner as we do our daily, our common blessings.



Was either the light of the sun, or the refreshing air of heaven withheld, we should soon learn from the absence of these, to appreciate their worth ; and so of the gospel, was the cheering light which it throws into the graves of departed relatives and friends withdrawn, how soon should we sigh for its return, and with it those delightful anticipations it was sent to cherish in our hearts. If pardon to the malefactor doomed to die, be received with delight—so must the cheering truth which christianity announces of death being swallowed up in victory, be to every mourner that goeth about the streets. And thanks to an impartial judge, that as death is the common lot of all, redemption from death is sent to all : this merciful dispensation it shall be the chief aim of this discourse to unfold. As it regards the nature of this redemption, you are aware that Christians materially differ in opinion ; many believe that Christ *purchased* redemption of God for mankind, by offering an equivalent for their deliverance. But when the scriptures are read with that care and attention they merit, we think that they teach quite another doctrine ; we read that redemption is owing to the riches of divine favour, “ by grace are ye saved ;” hence then we infer that that which is of grace or favour, cannot be of purchase, or be considered as having had a price paid for it. The apostle does not, in our text, speak of redemption as something paid on behalf of sinners, but implies a change in the state and circumstances of the persons redeemed : this change in the state of the redeemed, is evidently implied in the word redemption, and if all the passages of scripture in which this word is found, be carefully considered, it will be seen that it implies a change in the condition of sinners. For instance, the redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage, was a *real deliverance*, and surely Christian redemption is not less a reality. Redemption cannot, we think, relate to sinners being placed in a new light in the sight of God—this surely is impossible !! Because the Deity sees every thing as it really is, and every creature in the light



in which his real character places him. St. Paul does not teach that, redemption consists in Christ's having delivered us from divine wrath, or that the Saviour was punished in the stead of sinners, but he teaches that to deliver mankind from the power of iniquity, was the object and end of the Saviour's mission. It does appear one of the most lovely features of christianity, that the Saviour died, not to rescue sinners from the vengeance of the Almighty, "whose tender mercies are over all his works, and whose very name is *love*," but to save them from the consequences of error, folly, and sin. And from the apostle's own words we feel satisfied that redemption is identified with the forgiveness of sins, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Hence then are comprehended in the forgiveness of sins, exemption from punishment, and a deliverance from the terror or fear of death. And this redemption extends to both Jews and Gentiles, "for the same Lord who is over all, is rich in mercy unto all that call upon him." The apostle we think in using the language of our text, had in view the introduction of christianity, and its confirmation by the death of its founder. Let us now consider the object of the Saviour's mission to the Jews: he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for what? Not indeed as they had vainly imagined, to rescue them from Roman bondage, and to raise them to a state of worldly power or national aggrandizement, but from evils far more awful than those which human beings could inflict; and to place them in a condition far more exalted than that which any earthly power could effect. Remarkably distinguished as were the Jews from the Gentiles, by the Mosaic economy, yet it must be evident to every reader of their history, that they were as children under restrictions, and as pupils under tutors; this their state was introductory to the new and better dispensation. It was "a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, who was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law." Christ was sent to deliver his countrymen from

a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers could bear, and to introduce them to all the gospel privileges. Besides, the Jews had transgressed their laws, and broken the covenant of their God. Hence, that commandment which was ordained unto life, was found to be unto death, "its curse impended over its zealous votaries." But by the preaching of the grand doctrine of forgiveness of sins, on the terms of repentance and obedience which was sealed with the Saviour's blood; the Jews and Gentiles who embraced this gospel, were redeemed from the curse of the law, and all the penalties of the broken covenant. The direction which the apostles received from our Saviour is confirmatory of this truth. He commanded them to begin to proclaim to his countrymen at Jerusalem, the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness of sins, and St. Paul testified, that through *this man* a descendant of David, of Jewish parents, of whom Moses and the prophets did write, "through this *man*" says the apostle, "is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." We know that there was no justification from moral guilt in the law of Moses; it knew of no sacrifice for moral offences, but in the new covenant of grace, the free *forgiveness* of all offences is solemnly declared; hence we read in Hebrews 10c. 16v. "This is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their mind will I write them, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Under the gospel dispensation, the Jews found the curse of the law annulled—its condemning power abolished: they were thus redeemed from the law of death. Now in this manner the Jews we believe received redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ. In what sense let us next enquire, has Jesus Christ brought redemption to the Gentiles? It is not necessary to shew from history, that prior to the preaching of the gospel, they did not in any way par-

ticipate in the Jewish privileges ; or that they had lost all knowledge of the one true God—because we have already glanced at the condition of the Gentile world, and have seen that when our Saviour commenced his public ministry, to repeat the emphatic language of Scripture, “darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.” And what materially tended to perpetuate this darkness were those traditions or old wives fables which had shot their deep and firm roots into the very habits as well as minds of the people. From these errors was the gospel of Jesus Christ sent to redeem, and to ratify the truth of which, the Saviour shed his blood ; hence says the apostle Peter, 1st Epis. 1c. 18v., “ye were not redeemed by corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot.” Repentance and remission of sins were every where preached in his name, and this gospel was found, “the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believed ;” by this were the Gentiles delivered from their heathenish state, and made partakers of its blessings and hopes. In this manner were the Gentiles redeemed by the ministration of Christ, and by the same effectual means are sinners in every age to receive forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. In these last days God hath spoken by his son Jesus Christ, to the whole family of man, teaching the necessity of seeking repentance, there being no man who liveth and sinneth not. The gospel contains free pardon for all penitent sinners—for all who confess and forsake their iniquities, but to those who continue to disobey the divine laws—the consequences of such disobedience cannot be avoided. “Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” From hence we learn, that it is only the practical Christian who can be saved ; those only can be saved who cherish such a lively faith in their Saviour, as shall lead them to keep his command-



ments, and tread in his steps. Is it not most evident, that were Christians to admit the popular doctrines of the Trinity—the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, and the various notions which constitute the creeds of the religious world, that even such views would not, without holiness secure them salvation. My friends, “it is not every one that shall say, Lord, Lord,” or pronounce the shibboleth of any party, that shall be saved, but “he that *doeth* the will of my Father,” says the Saviour. And what was his commission to his apostles, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.” Now what is repentance, but forsaking wickedness and acquiring holiness? And what is remission of sins, but a deliverance from their consequences? “Repent” saith the apostle Peter, why? “that your sins may be blotted out;” Christ then came to redeem us from sin, by laying down such precepts of truth and righteousness, as shall enable us to forsake iniquity. This is the current language of Scripture respecting the redemption in Christ Jesus. Again, let us enquire how we have redemption through the blood of Christ? This question can be answered without impugning either the justice or the mercy of our heavenly Father, which we fear is the consequence of believing that the death of Christ, was necessary to appease his wrath, or to satisfy his justice, or as an equivalent paid to him for the salvation of men. For our own part, we cannot but think that such a view of God stands opposed to the character which the Scriptures every where give of him, as a *God of Love*. Our creation and existence is an act of love; wherefore did God create us but to manifest his love to mankind; and can we imagine that he who loved us, and sent Jesus Christ into the world to redeem us from sin, would require to be made merciful by the Saviour whom he sent? yes, say some, in order to be just and the justifier of him that believeth; as much as to say that omnipotence could not be just, or that he could not justify the principle on which he was willing to exercise forgiveness towards sinners, without making an innocent person die



to justify him in admitting the principle by which they might repent of sin, and find favour in his sight. Is this view worthy of that God, who while we were yet sinners, sent Jesus Christ to redeem us from all sin. Is it accordant with the apostle John's language, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins?" Surely not. Differing however as we do from many Christians respecting the doctrine of satisfaction, allow us simply to state, how it appears to our minds, that we have redemption through the blood of Christ. The dispensation of grace which Jesus introduced, was confirmed at the expence of his own life, and although martyrs, since our blessed Saviour, have shed their blood in the holy cause of truth; yet the blood of Jesus was more precious than that of other martyrs, because he was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and being also "the chosen son of God," "the beloved of the Father," his death was a nobler sacrifice to truth, than that of frail men. Besides all the blessings of the gospel we have through Christ, "through his blood:" for according to the divine appointment, unfolded through a number of prophecies, the truth of the Christian religion was to be sealed or attested by the death of the Saviour—"by the shedding of his blood"—"for greater love hath no man than this, that he layeth down his life for the brethren." No better, no more satisfactory proof do we need than this, to testify our Saviour's own belief in his heavenly mission, and its merciful aim. To establish the truth and efficacy of his gospel—to save sinners—he was willing to die upon the cross. Hence then as Unitarians we believe, that to effect our deliverance from the awful consequences of sin and death, he endured many sufferings even an ignominious death, a crucifixion between two malefactors. Besides which we think we see the wisdom and goodness of God in permitting the death of Jesus, to establish the glorious doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, "that as in Adam all die, so, in Jesus Christ,

all might be made alive :” that the Saviour might declare, “ I am the resurrection and the life, that whosoever believeth in me, although he die, yet shall he be made alive.” Jesus is the instrumental cause of our redemption ; he is the gift of the father’s love, and all the blessings which as Christians we enjoy, come from the fountain of divine grace, and are displays of the Father’s mercy. All that the Saviour did and suffered for our redemption, was of divine appointment. It was God that raised him up from among men, to be a prince and a Saviour. It was God who qualified him for the office of Saviour. “ Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth, I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles.” And observe, how the language of Scripture, while it points to the Father’s mercy in saving sinners also, proves the supremacy of God the Father to his Son Jesus Christ. “ Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens and stretched them out—he that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it—he that giveth bread unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein, I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold *thine hand* and will *keep thee*, and give *thee* for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles—to open the blind eyes—to bring out the prisoners from the prison—and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” “ I am the Lord, *that is my name*, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” And was it not God who sustained Christ through his *arduous duties* ? and was it not an apprehension of losing this sustaining influence, that led Jesus in his last moments to cry out “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” It was God that raised Jesus from the dead, and gave him glory that our faith and hope may be in God. And blessed be his name, the means and privileges of redemption are freely proffered to all who sincerely embrace the gospel. This not only shows the *freeness* but also the *fulness* or the plenitude of redemption. Sinners of every nation, in every age,

may partake of its blessings—the gates of mercy and salvation stand open night and day. Thanks be to God, they are not guarded by men of narrow and sectarian views ; neither can the decree of heaven, which announces forgiveness and salvation to all men, on repentance and amendment, be repealed by the arbitrary decrees of human beings. “ At the end of the present scene of probation will be revealed an event more awful and more grand than any which has yet been unfolded.” Then shall the world be judged in righteousness—then all to whom the holy law of the gospel has been proclaimed shall be tried by this law according to their deeds. “ They who have honoured their Redeemer in their lives, shall be exalted to immortal glory. They who have abused the precious advantages of religion, shall pass into a state of condemnation and punishment.” They also, whose ears the gospel of grace has never reached, and whose hearts its holy flame has never warmed, shall nevertheless be judged in righteousness, not however by the Christian law, which they have never received, but by that law of reason and conscience, which God has written upon all human hearts. When we hear Christians condemning each other to eternal woe upon sectarian grounds, and making salvation attainable only on the avowal of certain articles of faiths chiefly of their own invention, we are led to ask, who has made them the dispensers of divine justice ? who has authorised them to anticipate the judgements of the final day, and presumptuously declare who shall be saved, and who shall be condemned ? Can we believe that of the many millions of souls who have departed this life without any knowledge of the Christian scriptures at all, that they are to be consigned to eternal misery ? And can we believe that one sect of Christians has a right to draw out a number of religious articles in which they may believe, but which others cannot, and make these the test of God’s favour, and the term of admission to heaven’s blessedness ? Whatever some may teach as terms necessary to salvation, yet “ *after death* comes the judgement,” and to this judgement “ *our works* shall follow



us." How grand and merciful then is the work of our redemption, and how sincerely grateful should we feel to the supreme author of such vast and unutterable blessings as christianity has made known to us. How faithfully should we attach ourselves to him "in whose blood we have redemption," whom God the Father raised up to deliver us from sin and death. How earnestly should we labour to improve our days of probation as they rapidly succeed each other, and implore the assistance of our father to enable us to make our calling and election sure. Do you now ask, how shall we know that we are among the redeemed of Christ? We answer, not by admitting certain creeds, or affirming our belief in certain faiths; no, let us not be deceived. If it be the determination of some to perpetuate certain creeds, and upon these to rest the eternal hopes of mankind, shall we remain satisfied with such terms of salvation? or shall we not rather say we cannot rest our eternal hopes upon so slender a foundation, but know and feel that we must repent and cleanse ourselves from all unrighteousness, and live righteously and soberly before God. My friends, Christ is no redeemer for those, whatever may be their faith, whose lives are not in conformity to that of his. We may therefore easily know whether we are amongst the redeemed of Christ, as well as those who are so ready to proscribe us, or condemn us to eternal misery—for not cherishing exactly their notions of redemption. "For if we are sober, chaste, meek, and humble, we are surely saved from intemperance, impurity, anger and pride." If we are just in our dealings with our fellow-men—candid, forgiving and benevolent, we are saved from dishonesty, bigotry, revenge and covetousness. If we love, serve, and worship our heavenly father, we are undoubtedly saved from impiety, ingratitude, and disobedience. If we imitate the example, imbibe the spirit, and obey the instructions of Jesus Christ, we are then saved from unbelief, hypocrisy and condemnation. We need not enquire then into the length or soundness of our neighbour's religious creed; we need not ask whether it be



*heterodox*, or *orthodox*, we have only to look at his life, at his actions, at his temper, at his conduct as a husband, father, friend, citizen, and professor ; and if in each and all of those characters he strives to do his best—to acquit himself honourably before God and men, rest assured that his religious creed, call it by what name you please, is a sound one ; and on the other hand, if any man's creed produce not these results, it has not redeemed him from sin, but is as the sounding brass, and the tinkling cymbal. And let any man, belong to what sect or denomination he may, whose life has not been pure—whose habits have not been virtuous—the name and creed of his sect will work no miracles for him at death. These will not remove from his dying pillow the stings of a wounded conscience, or cause one ray of hope to irradiate his pallid countenance.

## LECTURE XII.

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 NATURE AND TENDENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.
 

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*Titus ii. 11 to 14.*

FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGETH SALVATION HATH APPEARED TO ALL MEN, TEACHING US THAT, DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORDLY LUSTS, WE SHOULD LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY, IN THIS PRESENT WORLD; LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE, AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF THE GREAT GOD AND OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.

THE spirit of all the precepts inculcated in the law of Moses, or delivered by the prophets, is that of love; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." And we think that the very essence of Christianity as a system of faith and practice, is comprehended in the words of our text. As we profess to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, who is not only the *author* but the *finisher* of our faith, it becomes us seriously to consider the *nature* of that religion which he not only laboured indefatigably to teach, but for the confirmation of which he sacrificed his life. And when we find that this religion was especially sent "to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we

may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ," Acts 26c. 18v., we must evidently perceive that it is to our interest as well as to our happiness to be thoroughly acquainted with the nature of our holy religion. It was this view of the religion of Jesus, which induced us in the discourses we have had the pleasure of delivering to you, to state its leading doctrines in a plain and familiar manner, and to endeavour to separate them from those which appear to us to be the doctrines of men. And from what has been said both of its authorised doctrines and precepts, we feel justified in affirming "that they are spirit and they are life." The gospel in its *pristine purity* does appear both valuable and extensive. It is the glad tidings of great joy to the world, because it announces forgiveness of sins unto all who repent of their sins, and turn unto God with full purpose of amendment, and because it originates in the free unpurchased love of the father. What cheering light, what glorious information does it impart, respecting the intentions of a merciful parent towards the human race, "That he willeth not the death of sinners, but that they should forsake their iniquity and live righteously and soberly, and thus find favour in his sight." The religion of Jesus reveals to us salvation for all—to persons of every description, of all ranks, stations, and ages; hence it extends from the cradle to the grave, through time and into eternity—it is our best support under trouble—it binds up the broken-hearted—it quiets the perturbed conscience by dispelling the fear of death, and by strengthening within us the hope of glory. Without this religion, the rich and the mighty are poor and miserable, and with it, the poor, the despised and the wretched are rich, beloved, and happy. The value and extent of our holy religion will appear great indeed by consulting the following prophetic language of Isaiah 49c. 22-23v., in reference to the church of Christ. "Thus saith the Lord God, behold I will lift up my hand unto the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people,

and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders, and kings shall be their nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers—they shall bow down unto thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord—for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” Respecting the nature of the Christian religion, differences of opinion have prevailed, for many have viewed it as an engine of the state, and have made it, as its history will shew, subservient only to worldly purposes. The dark and recorded deeds of inquisitors and inquisitions have, we think, arisen from this mistaken view of the nature of religion, and tended seriously to impede its progress in the world. But others view the religion of Jesus as entirely of a spiritual nature; “My kingdom, saith its founder, is not of this world.” The truth of which cannot be disputed as it does not interfere with human governments, or with the laws and privileges of nations and communities: it leaves all these as it found them; “Neither is it linked with the fortunes of any nation.” Blessed be God, it is a kingdom which will stand on record as an encouragement and consolation to all Christians in seasons of affliction and persecution, so long as time shall endure. It is designed to be universal and eternal. Every religion which the world before the coming of Christ had known, was more or less incorporated with established governments. The system of Paganism was altogether civil. The religion of Moses too, was intimately incorporated with his civil polity, but not so with the Christian religion; and although its founder was indeed a king, yet we no where find his insignia of temporal power, his palaces, his castles, his armies, his navies, his arsenals, and his retinue, no! these form no part of his kingdom; Christ came to sway the sceptre of authority over the hearts—over the spiritual, not the temporal interests of mankind. His power consists in the moral *influences* of his gospel, neither will his reign terminate until all the kingdoms of this world shall have bowed to his sceptre. He must



reign until sin and death be conquered ; and then, and not till then, shall he deliver up his kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all. Let us now consider the design of the gospel : men have ever been fond of substituting something in the place of godliness, or that holiness of life, without which no man shall see the Lord. The heathens depended on the efficacy of their sacrifices, to please their offended deities, and were ever disposed to lull themselves into supineness and indifference of moral conduct ; and Christians, whatever importance they may attach to the sacrifice of their Saviour, ought never to forget that his death has not purchased for them exemption from the consequences of sin, whilst they remain sinners. We may easily test the value of the doctrine of atonement, as *popularly held*, (to believe in which, many seem to imagine, that salvation chiefly depends,) by enquiring whether this doctrine, independently of holiness, can secure its advocates the favour of God. Certainly not : where then is the value of this doctrine of purchased redemption ? Is it replied, to render God merciful towards sinners ; we then ask, shew us the time when God was not merciful ? Besides if it be true, and it cannot be denied that sinners shall be punished for their sins—what then becomes of the *infinity* of the atonement offered to God ? We shall not however discuss this doctrine on the present occasion, as in our previous lectures, we hope to have shown that Christian salvation consists in deliverance from ignorance, error, and sin, and in the possession of Christian knowledge, virtue, and piety. The design of the gospel is then to save us from ungodliness and worldly lusts—from that proneness there is in all of us to follow after the desires of our own hearts, and not after the commandments of our heavenly father. It is sent to humble us in our own eyes, by teaching us what we are without divine help—by convincing us of our entire dependence on God for our every enjoyment. It is likewise intended to fill our souls with gratitude to him, for having provided us with remedies for our moral and spiritual dis-

orders—to supply us with means whereby we can overcome sinful passions—to afford us mutual joy in each others hopes and prospects, and to fire our souls with holy fortitude in danger, and with a most affectionate solicitude, to put off the old man of sin, and to put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. While the cause of the proneness of the human soul to sin is but slightly glanced at in the word of God, yet the destructive influence of sinful passions, is most powerfully urged upon the consideration of mankind. The Scriptures earnestly recommend attention, not so much to the nature and extent of Adam's sin, as to the different degrees of vice into which mankind may sink themselves. The grace of God earnestly recommends us to commune with our own hearts, seriously and impartially to observe what passes within our own bosoms, that we may the more readily detect every sin within us. Hence the following strong expressions, “let us purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for if ye sin wilfully after ye have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation.” Because it is impossible, argues the apostle, “for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of a holy spirit, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to open shame.” To know this is of infinite importance, and to know also that under the gospel, if sin reigns in the heart it will sharpen the sting of death, and cause anguish of soul in the moment of dissolution—that sinful passions, if indulged, will be continually disturbing the peace of the mind, because they are deceitful, debasing, and ruinous. The sacred writings abound with the most alarming accounts of the

baneful consequences of indulging the unholy desires of the flesh ; and these have been given to convince us that sin is directly contrary to the purity of the divine nature, to the design of his government, and to the authority and equity of his laws. Herein is the mercy of God apparent, in sending a Saviour into the world, to raise us by gradual improvement above the seductions of sense, and the power of temptation, to the most exalted heights of piety and perfection, both of temper and conduct. A design this, in every respect suitable to our present condition, as the rational children of God, as moral probationers, and as accountable beings—a design to which every thing else in life is inferior and subordinate, and by which the dispensations of providence are all regulated—a design worthy the infinite mind of the supreme Being, worthy the wisdom, the power, the purity, the benevolence, equity, and mercy of the God of all grace. To save, instead of destroying men's lives—to bring them to godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto obedience—to bring back unto himself the strayed sheep of his pasture, who had wandered into the wilderness of sin and folly—to convince the prodigal of his errors—to make him ashamed of his associates, and restore him again to purity and happiness ; surely all this is worthy the Father of mercies. Therefore we who have received abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, have the strongest reasons to join with the apostle “in giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and who will present us holy, unblameable and irreprovable in his sight, provided we continue in the faith, grounded, and settled, and be not removed away from the hope of the glad tidings we have heard,” and of the value of which the circumstances of every creature under heaven, have been the heralds in every age. Does it not appear that the eager-



ness with which mankind have substituted faiths and creeds, for that positive purity of life which the gospel has a direct tendency to produce, is one proof among many others of their having sinned, and their desire to remove from themselves its responsibility. Had it not been for the *superstitious ceremonies*, absurdities, and corruptions which have been incorporated into, and disfigured the pure word of life—which have led numbers to disregard it altogether, the purifying power of its principles would long ere this have been seen in the improved moral condition of society. Let mankind examine the gospel for themselves with impartiality. Let them view it as it is in itself, separate from the glosses of men—from educational prejudices—let them weigh in their own minds, the sublimity of its sanctifying doctrines—the purity of its precepts—the force of its motives—its holy encouragements and rewards of virtue, even in the present life. Let them consider the light which it diffuses over the future—the peace and joy which it imparts to the weeping attendants of a dying relative or friend—its power to support the soul while the outward man is falling into pieces—then every objection to christianity would entirely vanish, and the kingdoms of this world would sooner become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Hence then, the propriety and the force of the apostle's words in our text, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” How applicable is the term *us*, how it points to our present condition under the gospel covenant—yes, the gospel is educating *us* for an eternal inheritance—it is preparing *us* to become heirs of God, and joint *heirs* with Christ. Again,



the design of christianity, is to instruct us in every branch of religious knowledge; and, as an inducement to apply its principles to practice in the most effectual manner, we have been blessed with the example of Jesus Christ, "who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin." Let us then consider what the Christian dispensation is capable of doing for us. It instructs us in everything we want to know concerning the attributes of God; that we should love and serve him with all our hearts and minds, and aim at his favour and approbation in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. It teaches us how to act in every sphere of life—it forbids all immoderate indulgences, because pleasure itself, when enjoyed beyond the limits of moderation, *becomes pain*, and if persisted in for any length of time, invariably generates a hosts of ills that far outweigh all its pleasures. It teaches temperance and self denial—that a prudent moderation in our enjoyments and desires will considerably augment our present happiness. "That temperance will whet the edge even of the most ordinary pleasures," as hunger gives a relish to the coarsest crust. The gospel affords instruction to kings and governors, as well as to subjects—it teaches them to sway their temporal sceptres in wisdom and mercy, by reminding them, that they also are as much under the dominion of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, as any of their meanest subjects. It acquaints them with their nature and destiny, that they also must stand before the judge of the quick and the dead, to account for their every act of benevolence and mercy, of oppression, injustice, and vice. It teaches parents the duties they owe to their children—to win their affection and obedience by kindness, and to correct their follies and vicious habits, with firmness and discretion. It points out to youth their duty to those who gave them birth—to add to their years in the land of the living, by obedience to parental authority. In a few words, masters and servants, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, are severally instructed in their relative duties to each other. It leads us on step by step

to the attainment of virtue. It teaches us to “add to our faith fortitude, to fortitude knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness kindness, and to kindness universal love.” These are the various gradations of improvement in the divine nature which the gospel requires of us to make, until we shall arrive at a perfect knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel in its every precept, speaks unto us as our Lord spake unto the people, *with authority*. The authority of this gospel and its claims on us to universal obedience, are enforced by the most awful sanctions. “For God will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, and that he will render to all men according to their works, unto them, who by a patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto the contentious who will not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that doeth evil.” These sanctions are suited to all the various passions which have been implanted within us for holy purposes—they are adapted to the constitution of our natures, as beings who are to be influenced by motives, and as placed in a probationary state: yet at the same time, the authority of the gospel is enforced mildly, as that of an affectionate parent, making full allowance for our weaknesses and frailties. It wins us over to holiness, not by fear, but by love—by the most pleasing and endearing considerations. We are therefore justified in saying, that the present promises annexed to godliness, are most animating. On this subject, the apostles Paul and Peter, are most explicit. The former observes, that one great excellence of the gospel dispensation, above that of Moses, consists in this—that Christians are the temples of the living God, as God hath said, “I will dwell in them and walk in them, for this is the covenant I will make with them—I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Having

these promises, dearly beloved, let us purify ourselves, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and saith St. Peter, “the divine power hath given unto us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye may be made partakers of a divine nature, having escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust; wherefore give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” If promises to dutiful obedience are of any service in the training of our souls for heaven, surely those just quoted must be most useful and encouraging to all Christians. And if it be true that the happiness of man consists not in the possession of things temporal, but in things spiritual and eternal—then the superiority of the gospel above all the systems of philosophy or religion ever recommended to the world, will appear most evident. Having defined the nature and design of the Christian religion; surely we need not add another word to show how important it is, as a means appointed by a wise and merciful parent, “to bless us in turning every one of us from our iniquities.” It sets the world and all its concerns in a clear and interesting light before us—it creates all things anew—it brings light out of darkness, revealing another and a better life beyond the present. Having shewn that religion was sent to bless mankind—to turn them from sin—to purify their thoughts, feelings, and conduct—to prepare them in time for eternity. It remains now to urge upon you, the necessity of obeying this holy gospel in all things; and remember, that however some Christians may charge us as a Christian body, by relying upon our good works to get to heaven, that heaven is not attainable *without* good works, for they are the only scriptural evidence of a Christian character, and they are the only means whereby this character can be formed. This surely is the reason why they are so repeatedly insisted upon by our Saviour and his apostles. Probably there is no subject on which they have said so much, because good works if they do not amount to



holiness itself, are dependent upon it—the best manifestations of obedience to the will of heaven. If the fruit be bad, we may unhesitatingly pronounce the tree bad—we cannot expect to gather figs from thistles, nor grapes from thorns. If the outward actions of a man are vicious, who will presume to pronounce his heart as the seat of moral purity? For the same reason if a man's life be one uniform course of virtue, who will deny the worth of virtue in that man's mind, and let his faith be what it may, who would think of denying to that person all hope of salvation? You are aware that an inspired apostle has declared, that a man is justified by *faith alone*; but let us ask, what kind of faith can this be? is it not a firm conviction of the truth and value of the Christian religion to purify the mind; and is not this faith a *living, operative principle*? It cannot be a mere passive belief, but an active principle, which is as sure to yield good fruits as the sun is to give light and heat. This was the faith the apostle intended, which language corresponds also with that of another inspired apostle, “yea, a man may say thou hast faith, and I have works, shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by or in my works.” Hence in the same proportion in which a person obeys Christ, just in the same proportion will he bring forth good works, and just so far as he exhibits good works, just so far is he a practical Christian, and so far as any man is a practical Christian, so far is he saved. But Unitarians no more than any other class of Christians, rely upon their own merits for salvation; they are fully sensible, that as the grace of God bringeth salvation, so by the grace of God they and all mankind will be saved; “by grace are ye saved saith the apostle, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” And here we beg to remind those who place so much reliance on the mere efficacy of faith for salvation, that on inspired authority, there is as little ground to hope for salvation on faith, as on good works. We are sensible, that for all the unspeakable blessings of the gospel, we cannot make any ade-



quate returns to our Father; he is infinitely beyond all blessing and all praise. It is however most evident from the language of Scripture, that if we refuse to follow after holiness, we cannot be saved, and for the consequences of this refusal we can blame none but ourselves. Although salvation is of free grace, the gospel teaches that to those only will it be given who have cultivated Christian knowledge, virtue, and piety. My friends, does the voice of nature and of revelation teach us that there is an infinite God who rules over all worlds—a power that shines in the sun, and is conspicuous in the firmament—a power that is felt in the lightning and in the earthquake—a power that is engaged to lead us to knowledge, virtue and happiness? Then let each of us say, this God is my Creator, my Father, my Governor, my Judge, and my Friend. Let us do more than believe this; let us feel that he is such unto us, and that we are responsible to him for the use of all his gifts and privileges, mental, moral, and spiritual. Let us each feel the responsibility of our relation to this great parent, who sent his Son into the world to bring us light and pardon for our sins, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? and let us seriously ask ourselves, has christianity been to us the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation? Have we imbibed the spirit, and imitated the example of the Saviour who died for us? Does christianity disclose to us a world beyond the grave, in which tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil, but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good? Let then these solemn enquiries affect each one of us, so that in us the gospel may have answered its merciful design, in having prepared us for what is yet to come. May religion pervade our lives; may its spirit be infused into our temper and conduct; may our daily thoughts and purposes be purified and consecrated by its influences, and then, not until then, will christianity have had its design answered in us. The object at which all the means and institutions of the gospel aim, is the purity

of our hearts and lives; without this, it has been sent to us in vain. Men may make all the profession they please of religion—they may teach what they please as its doctrines, but if what they profess and teach as religion does not make them more like Christ, better men in all the diversified characters of life—if what they profess and teach as religion, does not make them honest, sober, chaste, meek, humble, forgiving, and charitable, their professions and teaching cannot avail with a righteous God. We have now brought to a close a course of lectures upon the Christian religion; in doing which, our aim has been to promote your improvement and your present and final happiness. In the course of our religious enquiry, we have felt it to be our duty as lovers of divine truth, to test by the word of God, as far as time, circumstances, and ability allowed, some of the popular doctrines which are maintained by many pious Christians of the present day. The discharge of this duty may have subjected us to the displeasure of some, and to the misrepresentations of others; should this be the case, we shall not be surprised: for let any person once presume to remove old prejudices—it matters not of what kind, or to root up errors, however evident, which time may have in a measure sanctioned; such a person is sure to be viewed as an enemy to truth, and a disturber of society. When the blunders of old astronomers were first discovered, the discovery and the discoverer were viewed with alarm. When the telescope was first invented, the inventor narrowly escaped punishment for presuming to see farther than his neighbours, and the splendid discovery of printing nearly cost its inventor his liberty—a discovery which has since knocked off the chains of many a prisoner, and set at liberty many an enslaved mind. Although we have not made any new discoveries in theology, for which our happiness and peace of mind are to be disturbed, yet we feel prepared to endure a little odium and misrepresentation, if needs be, by having attempted in these lectures to remove from the pure word of life, the errors by which we think its beauty and

utility are disfigured and concealed. In doing this, however, we trust we have not lost sight either of Christian charity or the right of all persons equally with ourselves, to judge for themselves in matters of religion. Our conscience acquits us of any wilful misrepresentation of any of the doctrines or principles we have stated and opposed. Our object has been the discovery of Christian truth, in which all mankind are equally with ourselves deeply interested. If by delivering these lectures, we have incurred the displeasure of any persons, we crave their Christian charity, but not their forgiveness, because we shall ever feel it to be our duty as far as in us lies, to defend what appears to be the truth, as it is in Jesus, and to expose what appears to our minds decided errors. Wherein we differ from other Christians in the religious views we entertain, these differences can never lessen our esteem for the good and the virtuous, be their creed what it may, or lead us to withhold our willing co-operation, to promote the knowledge of God's word on the earth, and the present and final happiness of all mankind. Having heard that it is the wish of many highly respected friends, that I should state the leading features of my *own* religious faith at the conclusion of *these Lectures*, it is now with much pleasure, that I accede to their request. I believe in God the Father Almighty—the creator of the heavens and the earth—the moral governor of the universe—who is invisible, incomprehensible, and omnipotent; but whose moral attributes and perfections are abundantly manifested in his works, which render him worthy of all homage, love, and obedience from his rational children. I believe in his power, wisdom, and goodness—in his truth, mercy, and holiness—in his providence and grace—that there is but *one God*, the first cause and the author of all things; that this God is a *spirit* and not a *person*, and ought to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, but not God the Father of whom Moses and the prophets did write, “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,” who, saith St. Paul, in the fullness of time, *God* sent forth into the world,



“born of woman and made under the law.” I believe that Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man, whose power to work miracles and wonders and signs, was a derived power. “All power saith the Saviour is given to me in heaven and in earth,” “that I can of mine ownself do nothing.” That the spirit was *given* to him by God without measure, that the Father anointed him with the holy spirit and with power, so that never man spake like him. I believe that Jesus Christ is, except the Father, the most glorious being of whom we have any knowledge, worthy to be loved, honored, and obeyed; that he is the way, the truth and the life. I believe that he was taken, and by cruel hands was crucified and slain—that he was buried, and on the third day arose from the dead—ascended to heaven, and now sitteth at the right hand of God the Father. I believe that *God* has appointed Jesus Christ to be the judge of the quick and the dead, and after the judgement, Christ shall deliver up his power and authority—*his kingdom* to God the Father, that God may be all in all. I believe in the Holy Ghost, not as a third distinct person of the Godhead, but as the operation and influence of God’s holy word upon our hearts, convincing us of the danger of sin, and the necessity of holiness, without which none shall see the Lord. That it is the spirit of truth on which the new dispensation of grace and mercy rests—the very *Comforter* promised by our Saviour to the world after his ascension to heaven. I believe in the resurrection of the just and of the unjust in life everlasting, to all who by patient continuance in well doing are seeking after glory and immortality, and in an awful punishment as the portion for the ungodly—that final punishment will not be destructive, but corrective, and that in God’s own time, all his children shall enjoy his pardoning mercy; that thus universal righteousness and joy may prevail, “when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.”





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